

S U P E R M A NTM

• THE LAST DAYS OF •

LEX LUTHOR

WAID • HITCH • NOWLAN • BARON



BOOK
ONE



BLACK
LABEL

13+
TEEN

S U P E R M A N
• THE LAST DAYS OF •
LEX LUTHOR

BOOK ONE

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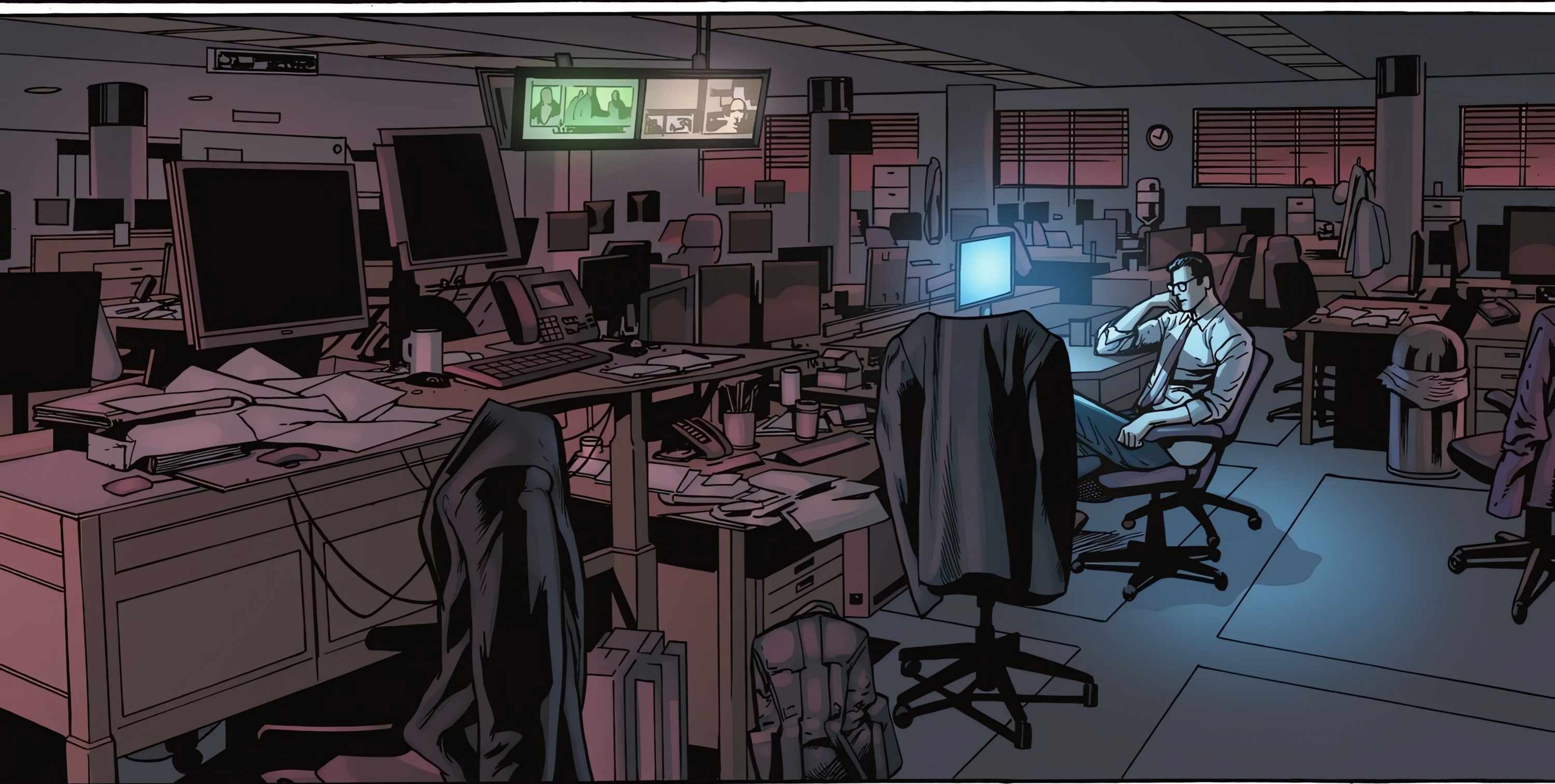
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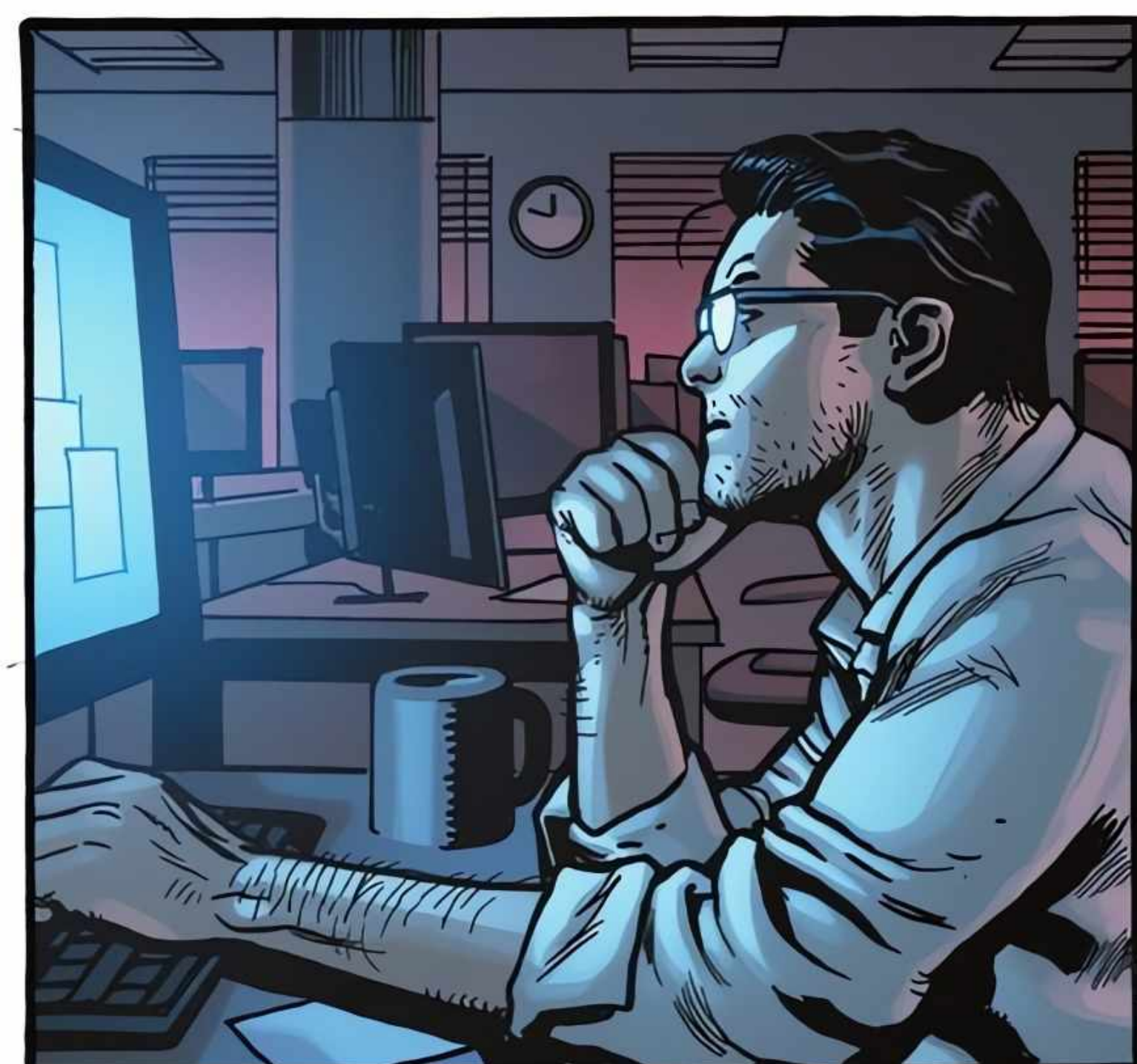
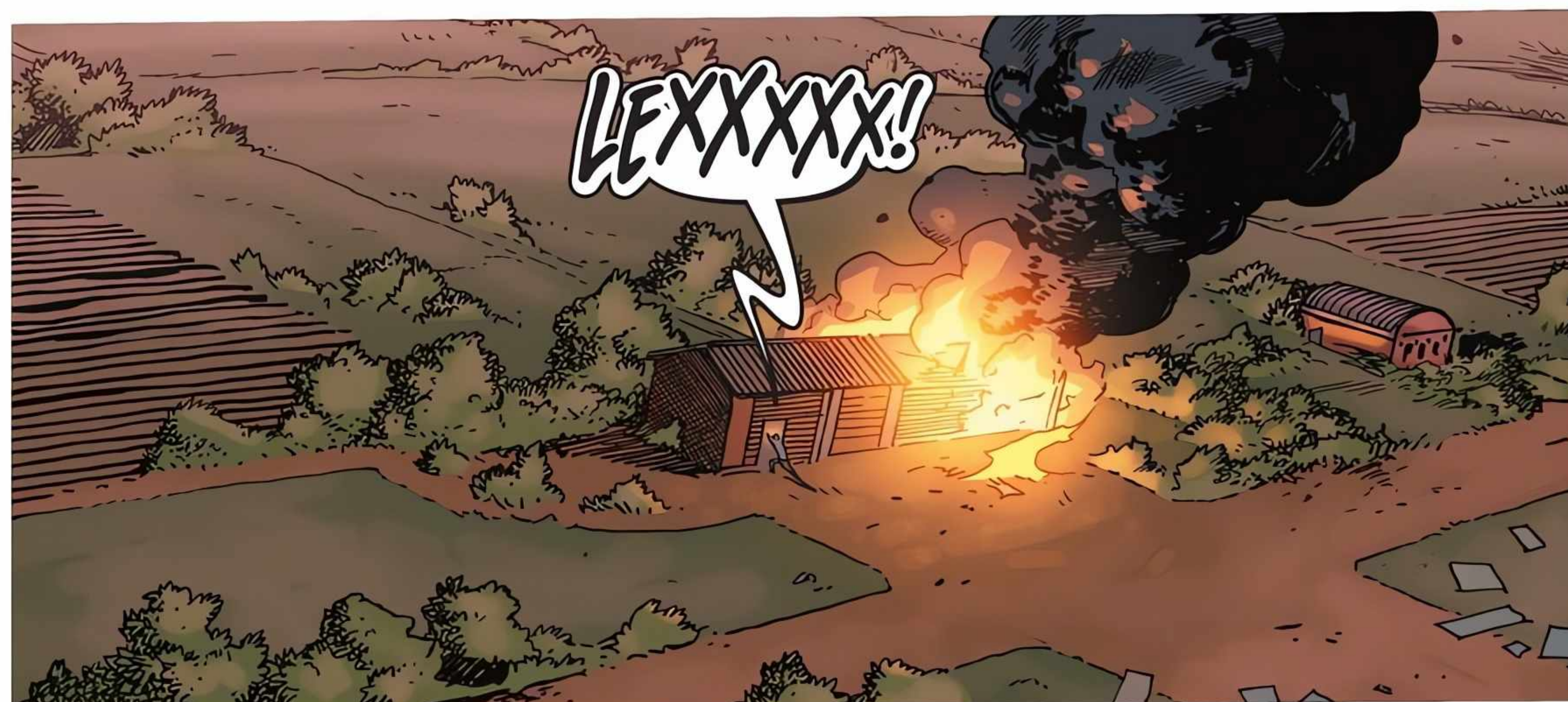
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SUPERMAN created by JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER.
By special arrangement with the JERRY SIEGEL family.







THE LAST DAYS OF LEX LUTHOR

by CLARK KENT

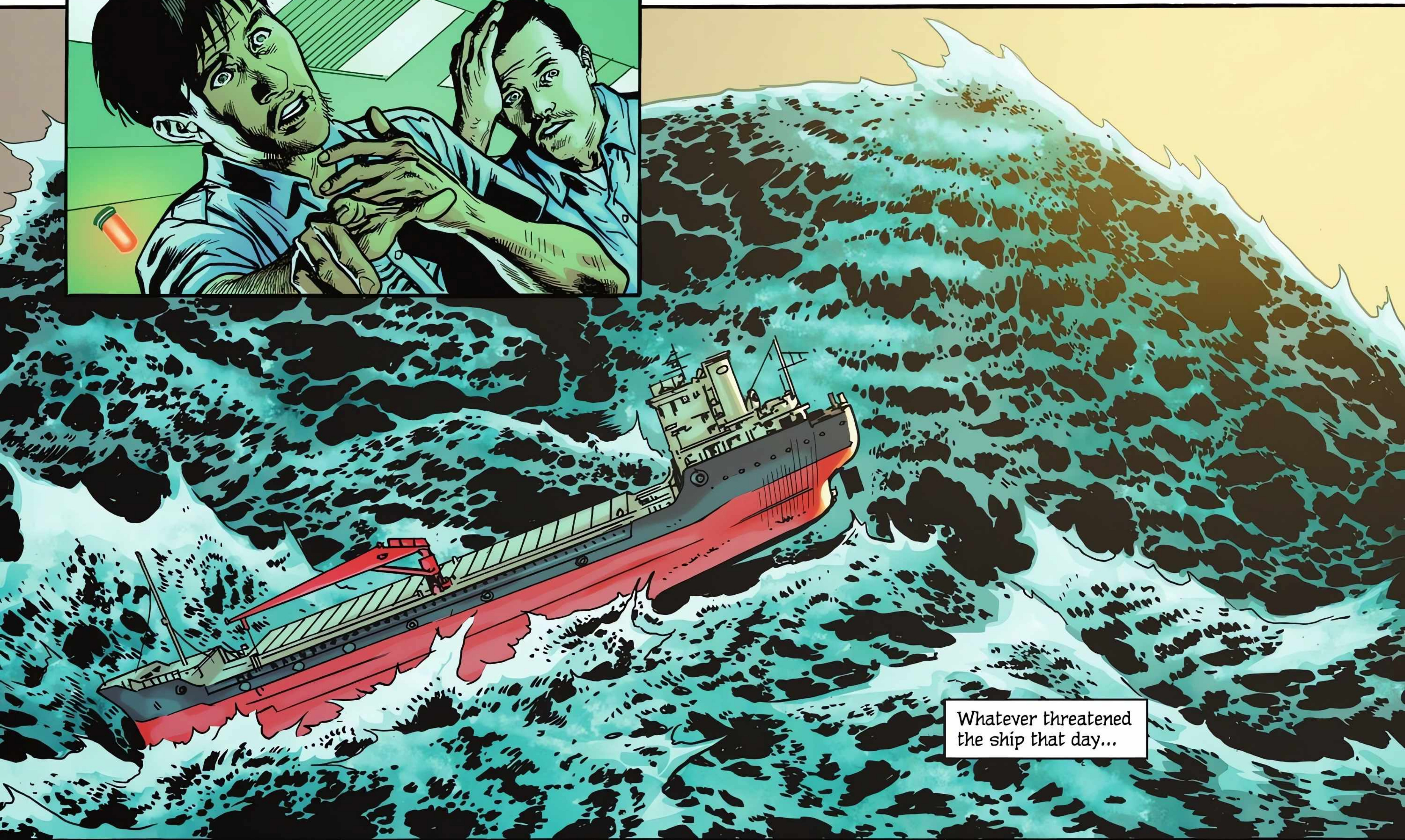


Off the coastal islands of Bangladesh, a ship began lurching violently, unexpectedly.

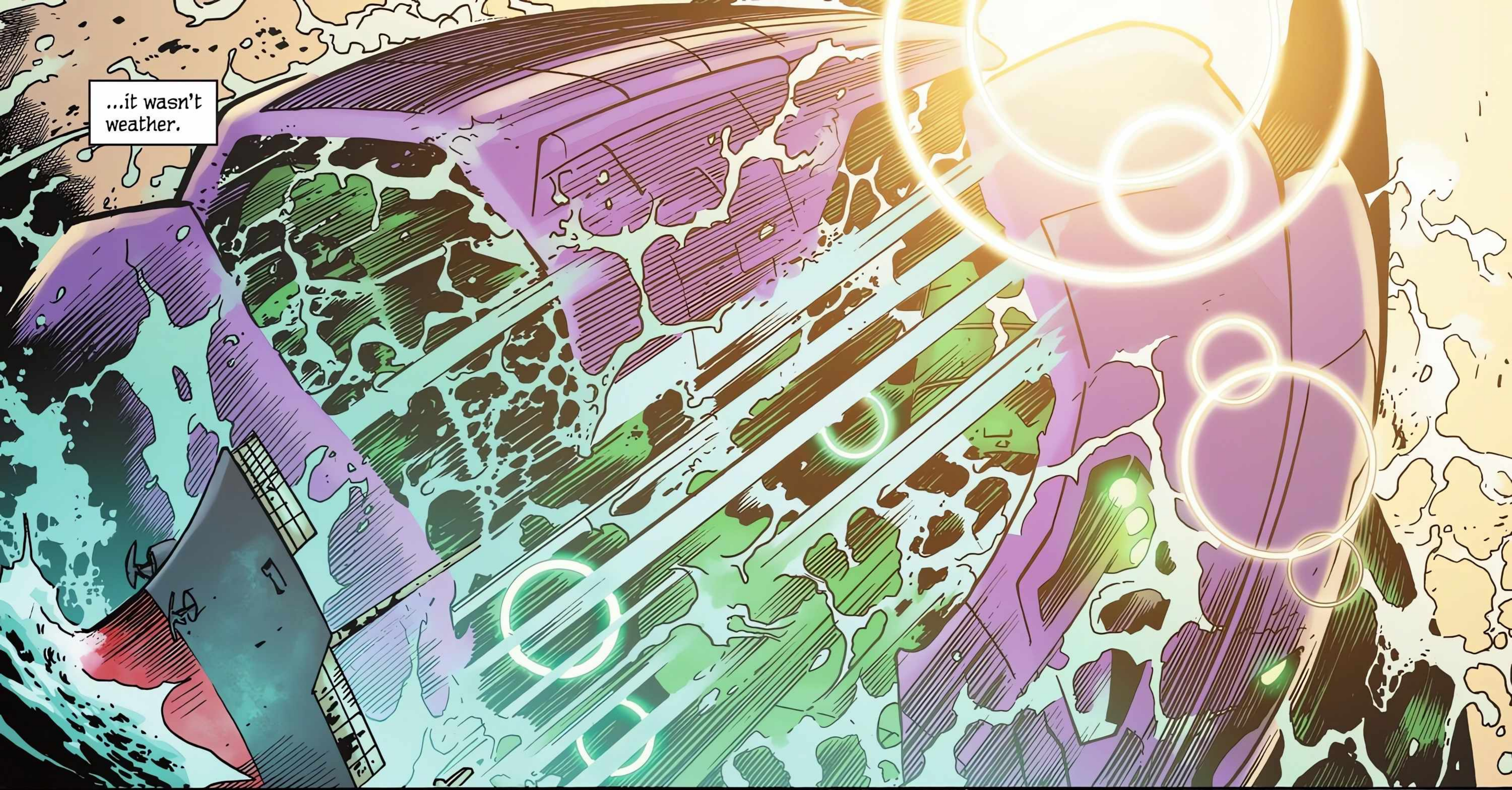


The skies were blue and cloudless.

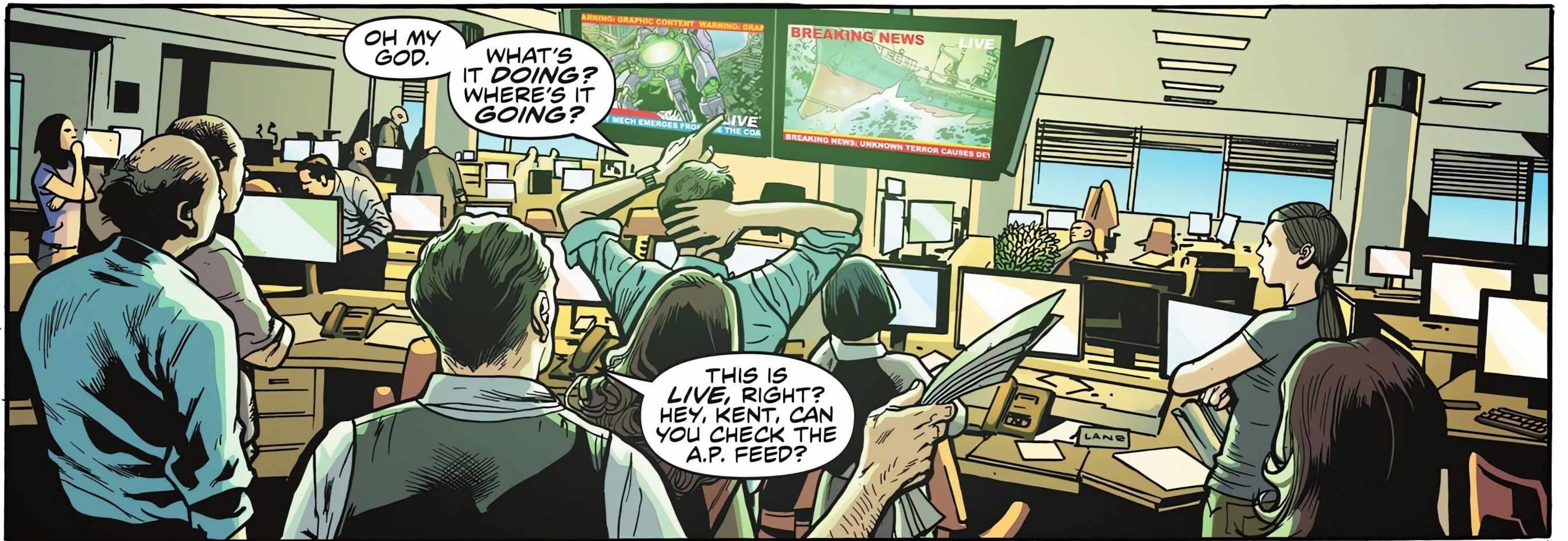
There was no storm.

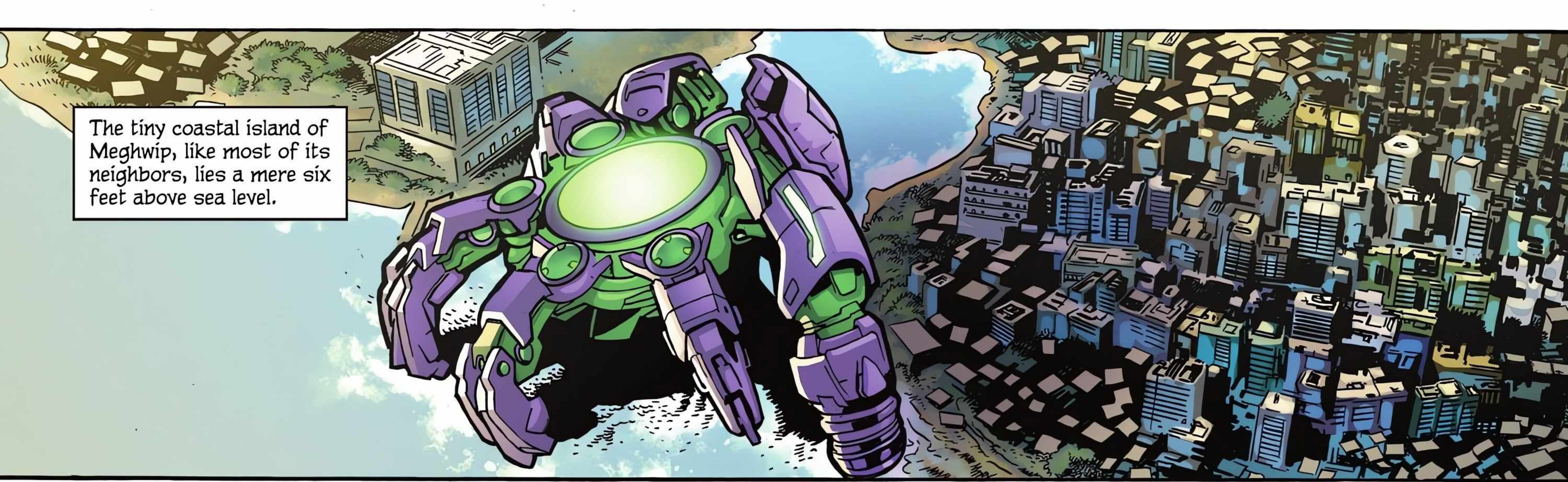


Whatever threatened the ship that day...

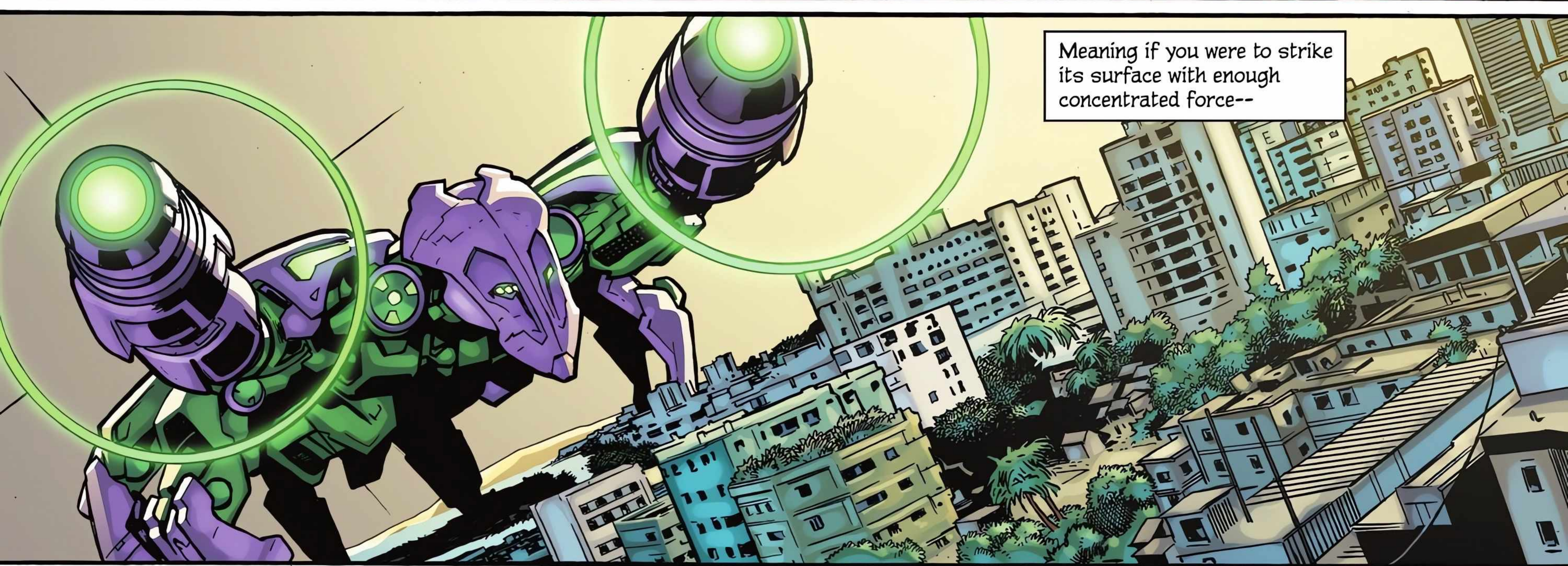


...it wasn't weather.

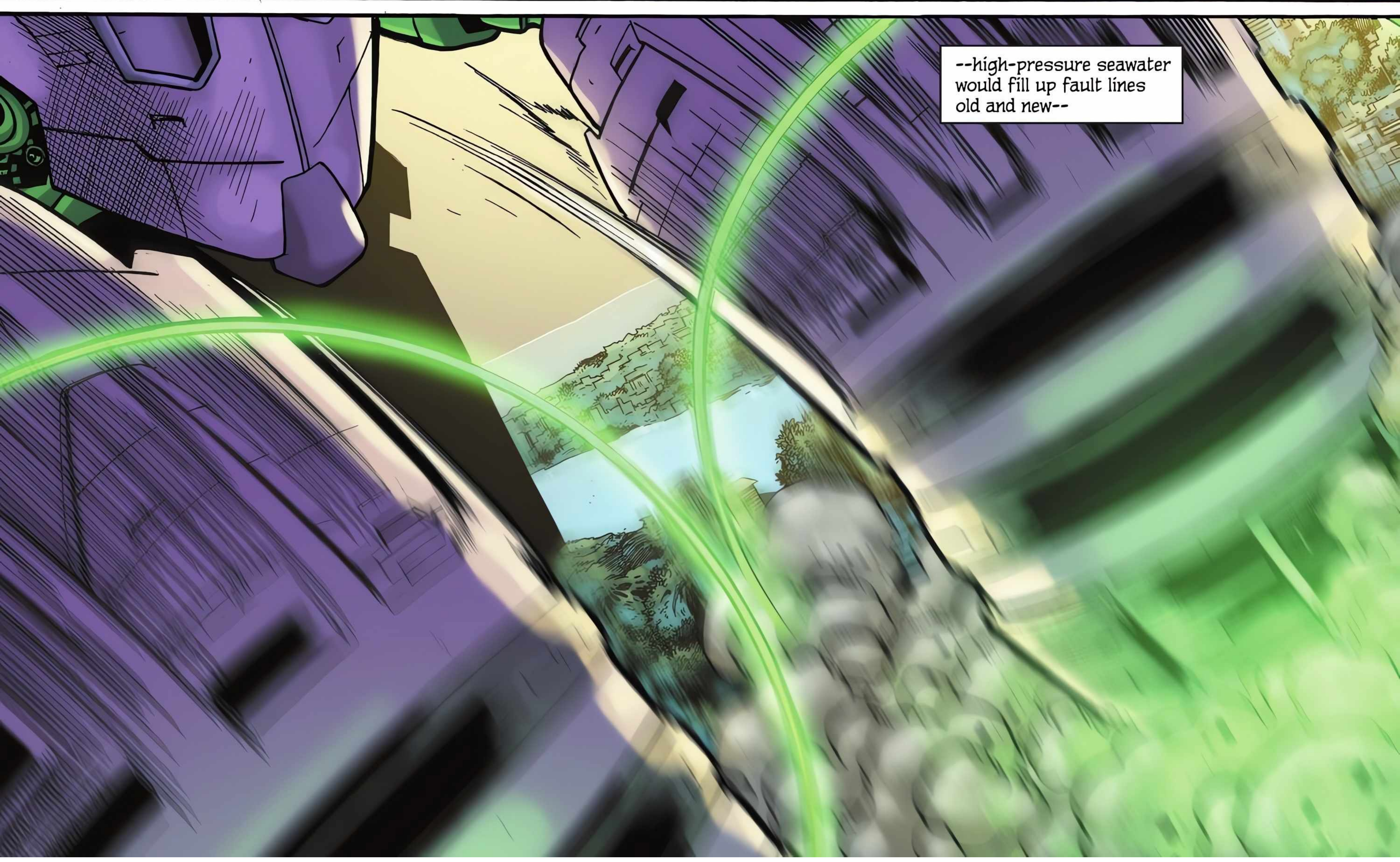




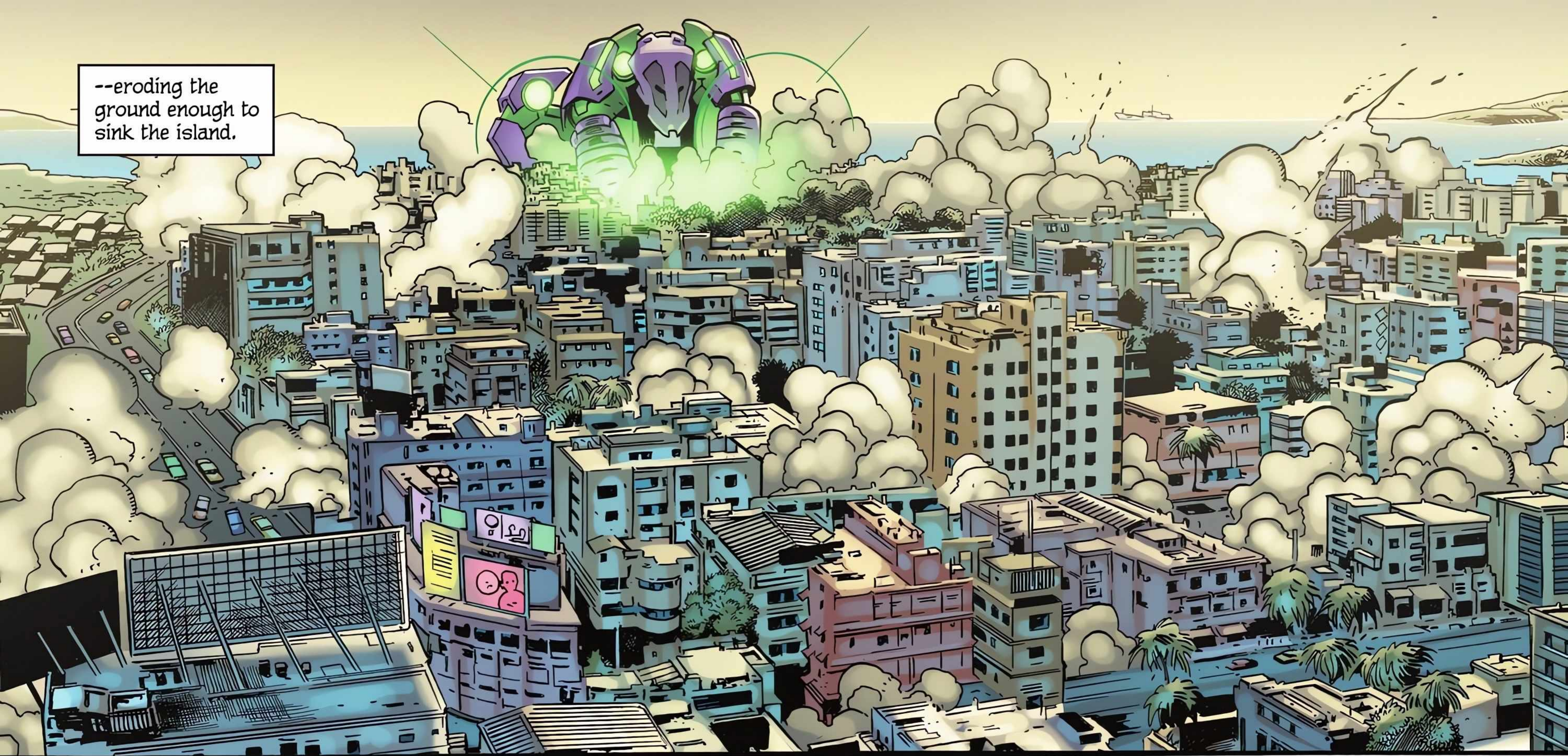
The tiny coastal island of Meghvip, like most of its neighbors, lies a mere six feet above sea level.



Meaning if you were to strike its surface with enough concentrated force--



--high-pressure seawater would fill up fault lines old and new--



--eroding the ground enough to sink the island.



Meghwip was crumbling.

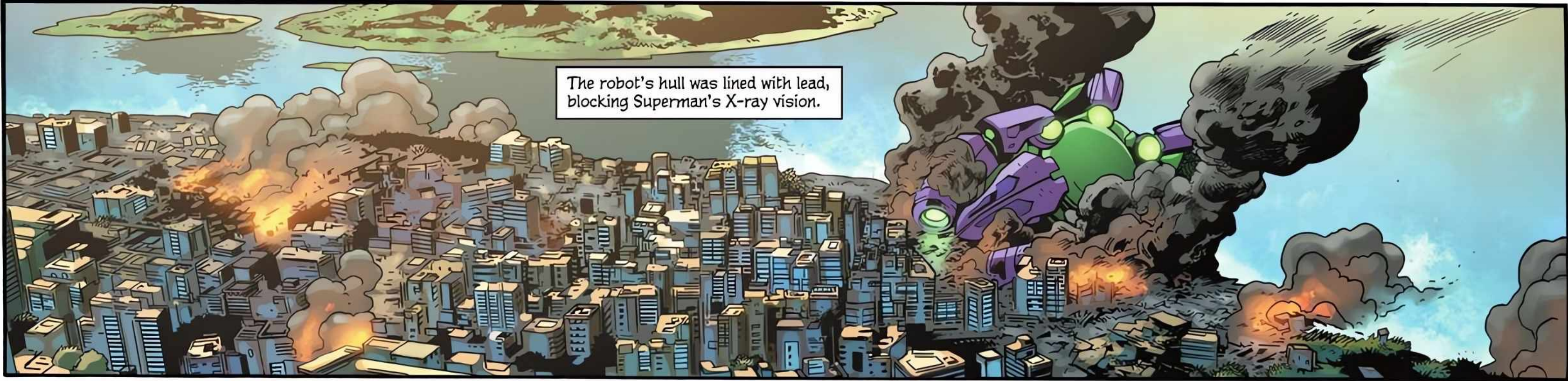
There was no escape.





To the surprise of everyone, the resultant damage claimed not one life that day.

The origins of the machine itself, however, were a mystery.



The robot's hull was lined with lead, blocking Superman's X-ray vision.



Nevertheless, what it contained--

--could hardly
have been a
surprise.



YOU.
OF
COURSE,
YOU.

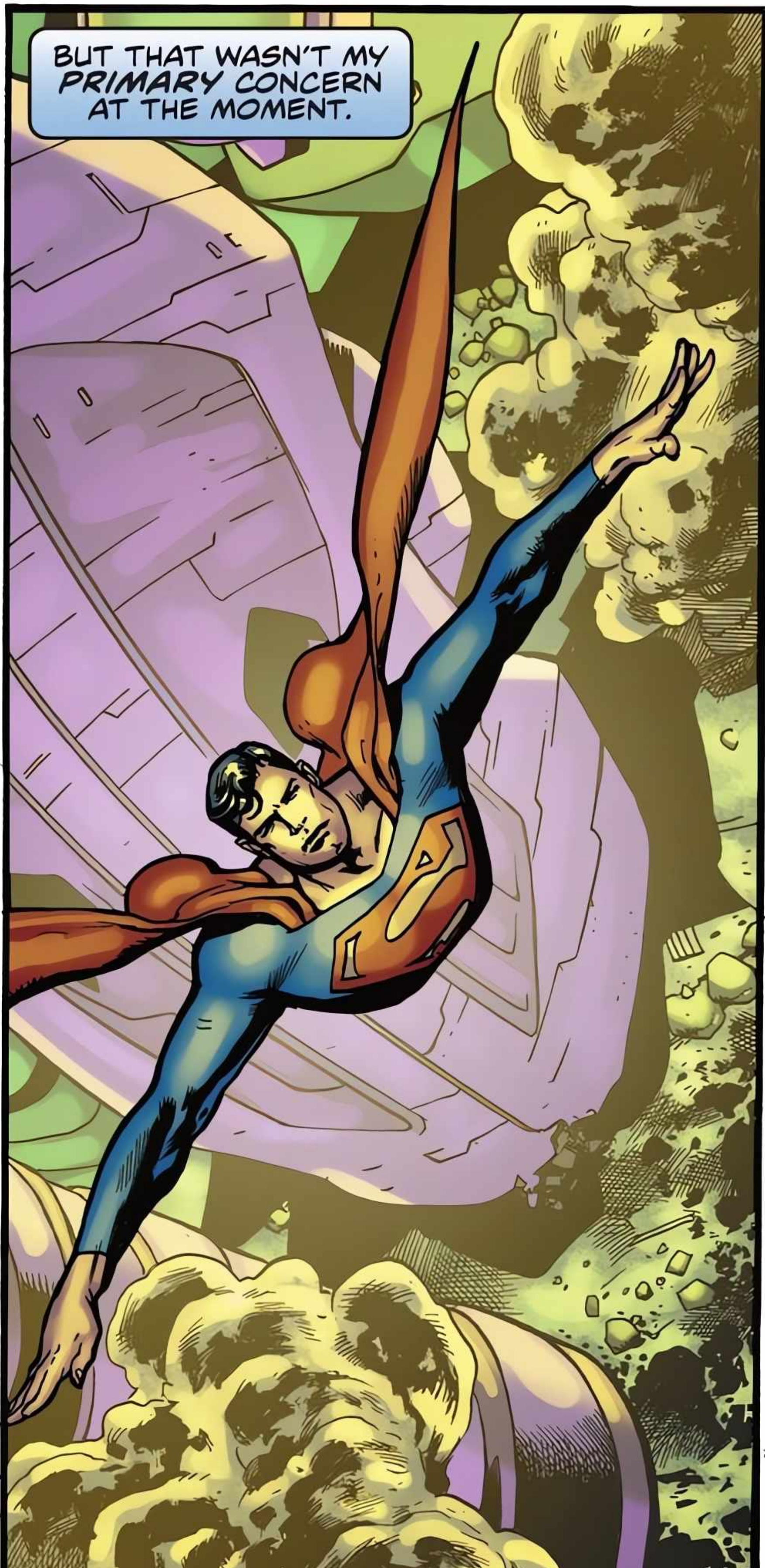


HI.
GOT A
MINUTE?

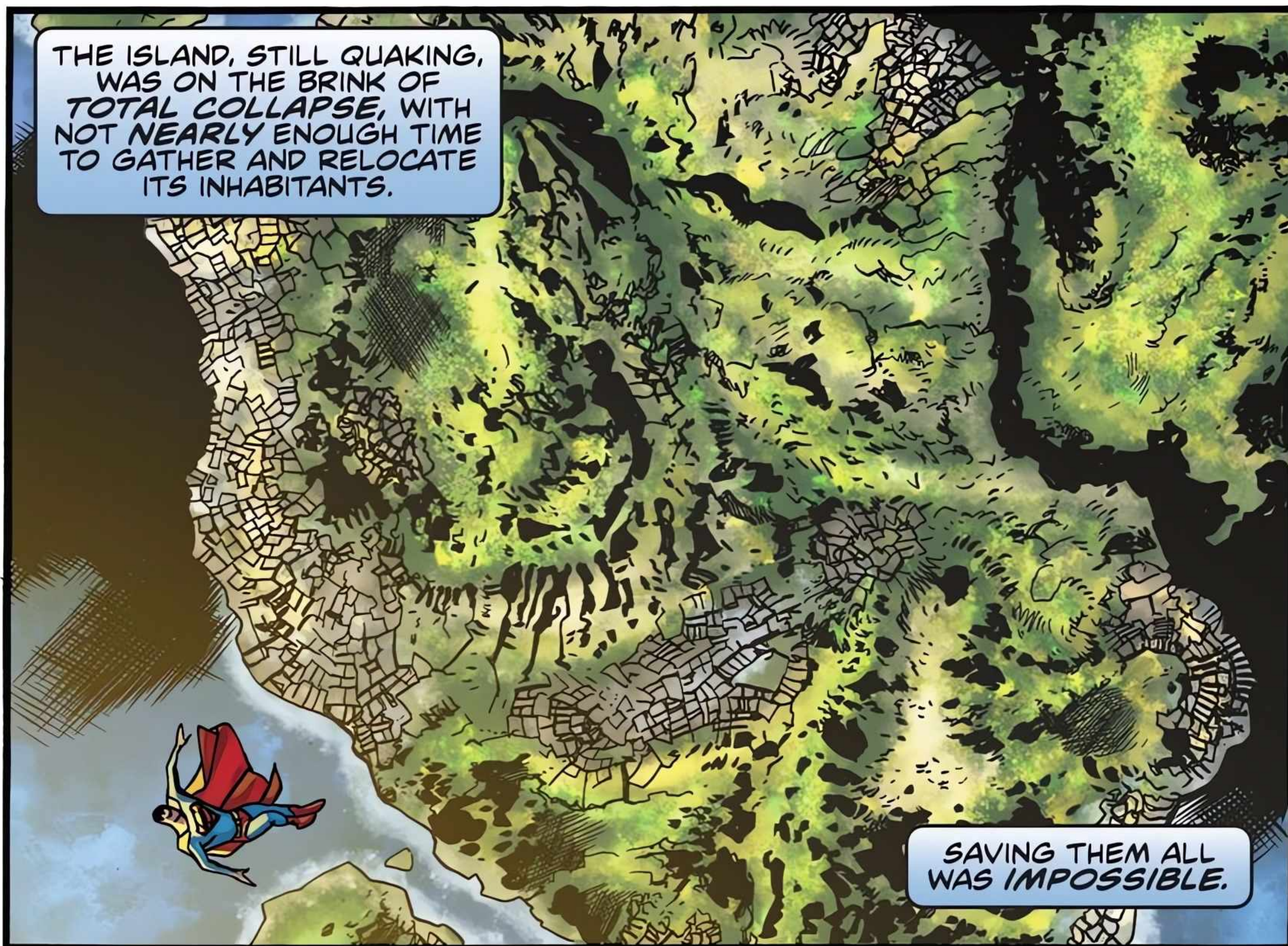


Superman knew instantly
something was off about
Luthor.

I KNEW INSTANTLY
SOMETHING WAS OFF
ABOUT LUTHOR--
AN ODD TWITCH IN HIS
MUSCLES, HIS LABORED
BREATHING.



BUT THAT WASN'T MY
PRIMARY CONCERN
AT THE MOMENT.

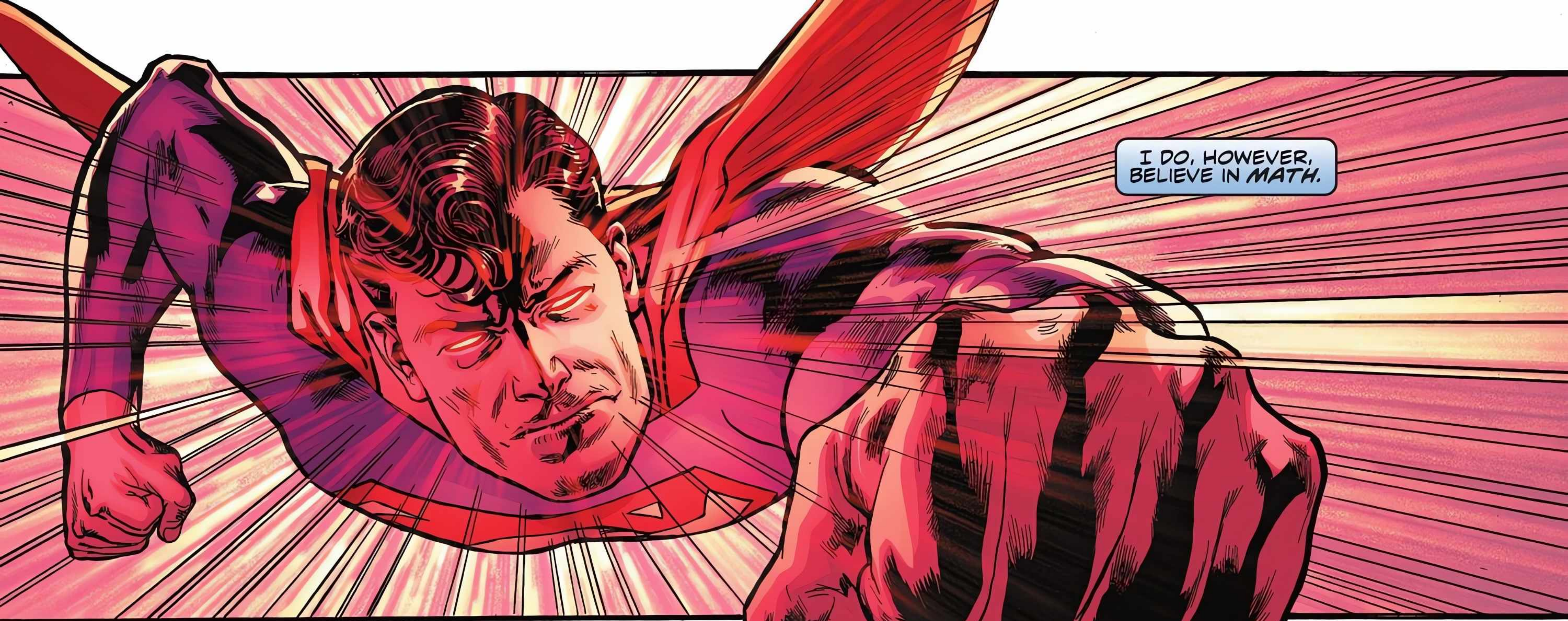


THE ISLAND, STILL QUAKING,
WAS ON THE BRINK OF
TOTAL COLLAPSE, WITH
NOT NEARLY ENOUGH TIME
TO GATHER AND RELOCATE
ITS INHABITANTS.

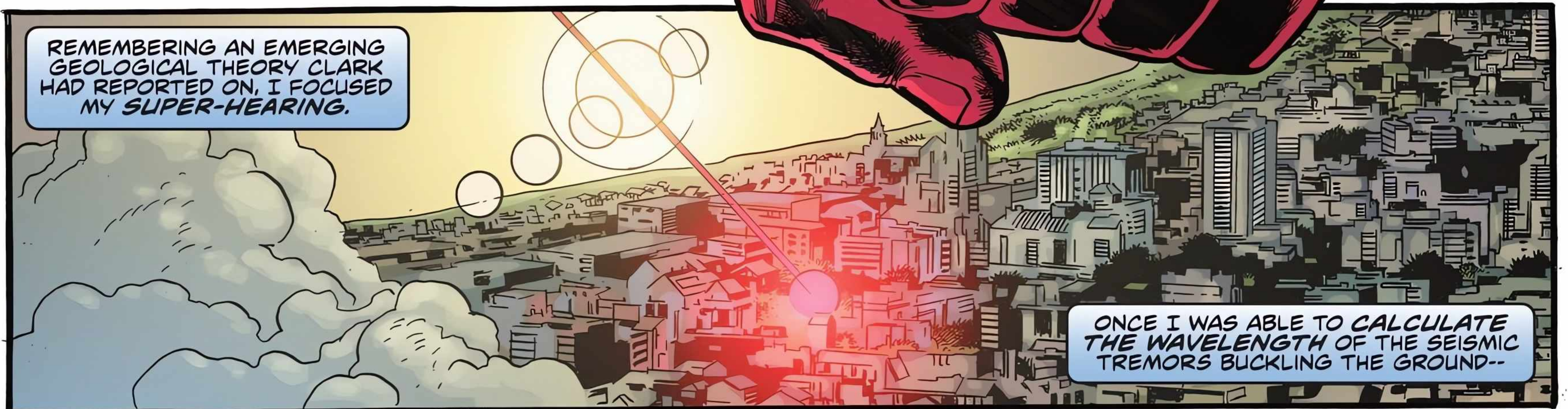
SAVING THEM ALL
WAS IMPOSSIBLE.



BUT I DON'T BELIEVE
IN IMPOSSIBLE.



I DO, HOWEVER,
BELIEVE IN MATH.

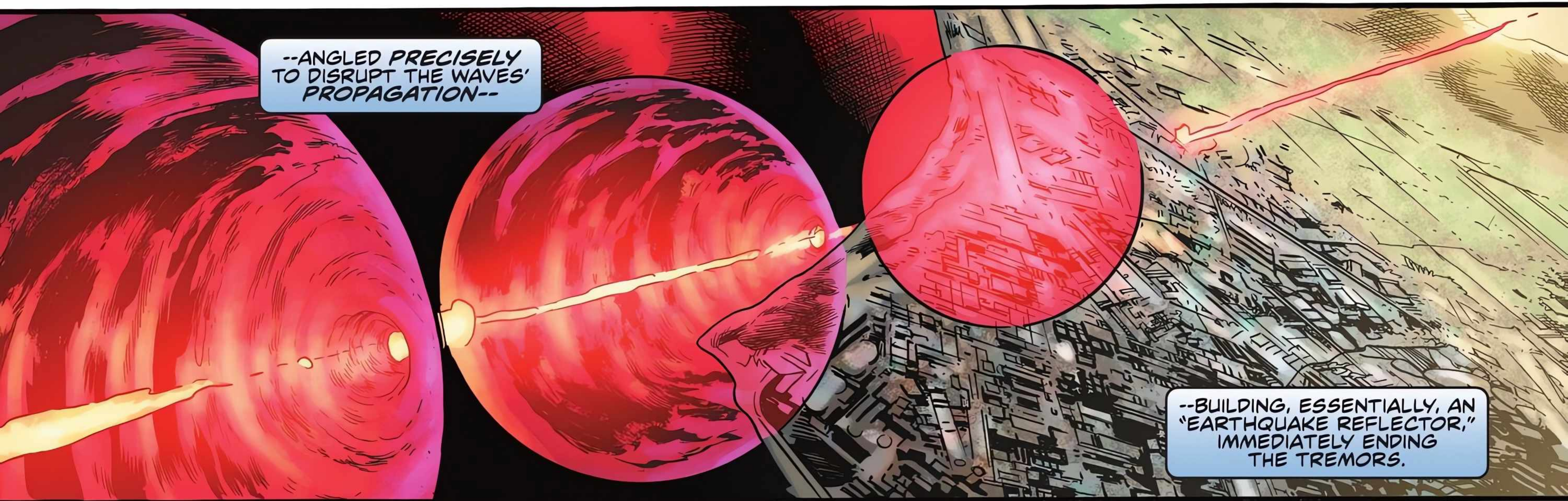


REMEMBERING AN EMERGING
GEOLOGICAL THEORY CLARK
HAD REPORTED ON, I FOCUSED
MY SUPER-HEARING.

ONCE I WAS ABLE TO CALCULATE
THE WAVELENGTH OF THE SEISMIC
TREMORS BUCKLING THE GROUND--

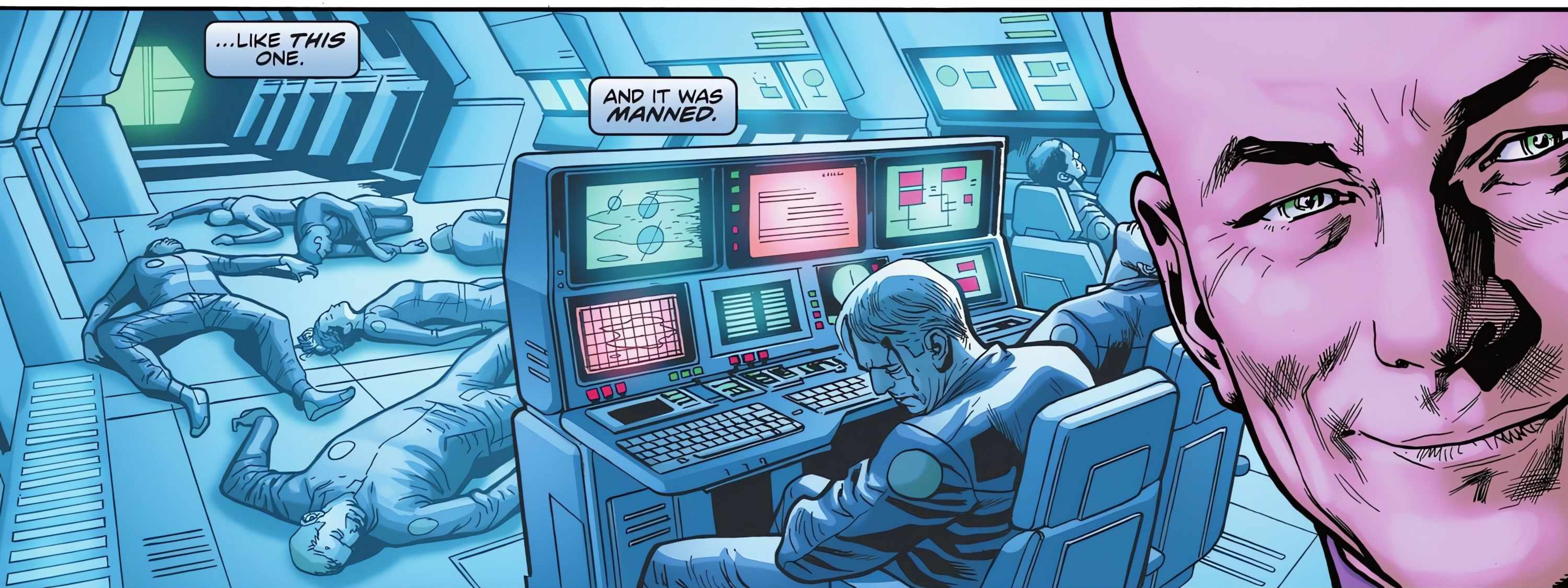


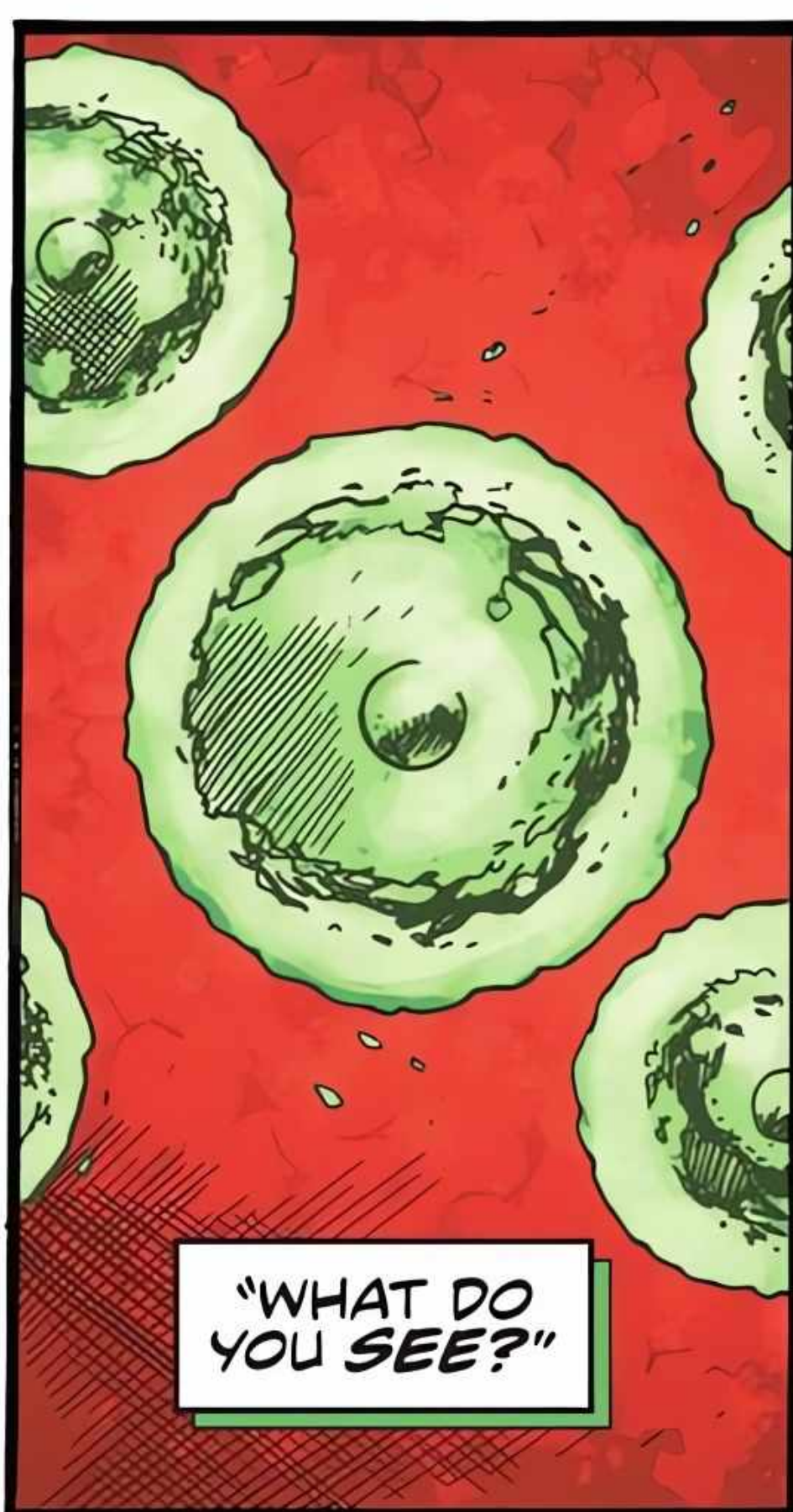
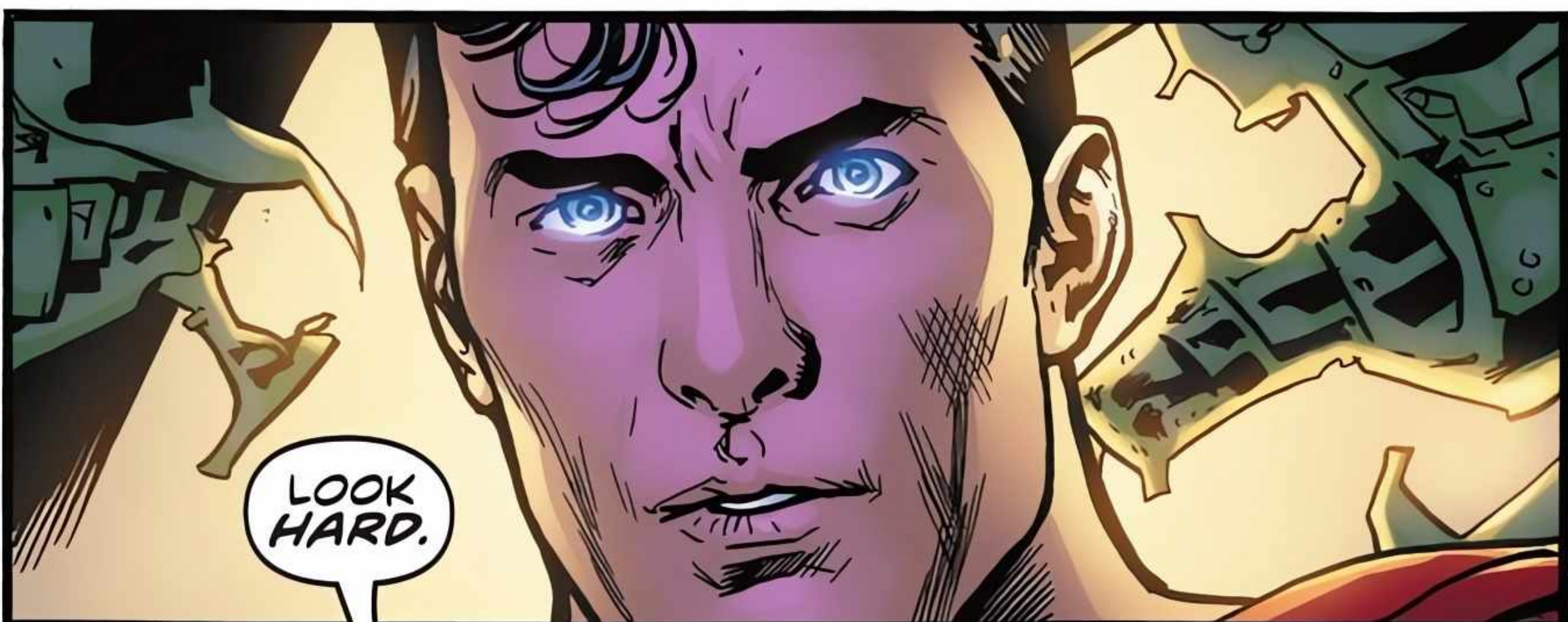
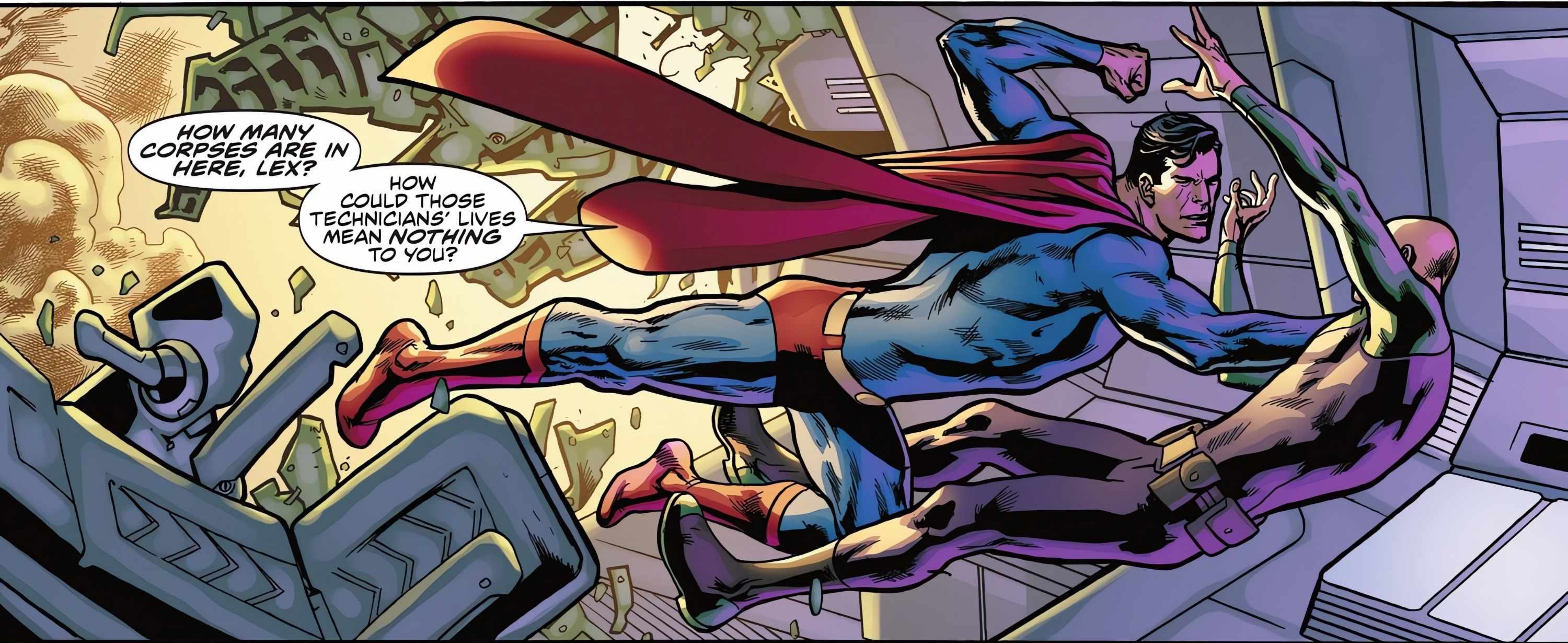
--I BEGAN, AT SUPER-SPEED,
TO DRILL A TARGETED SERIES
OF "ECHO CHAMBERS"--

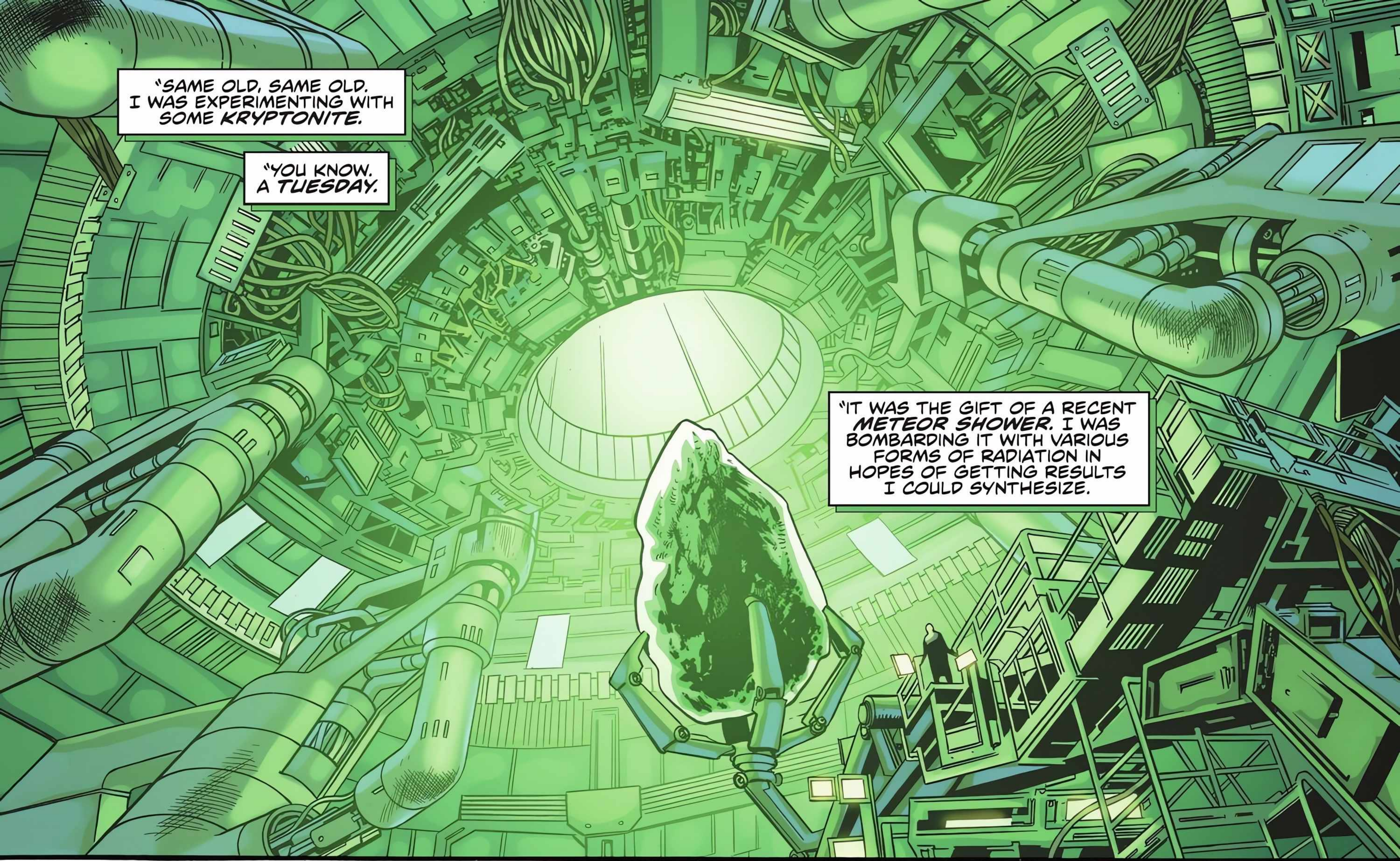


--ANGLED PRECISELY
TO DISRUPT THE WAVES'
PROPAGATION--

--BUILDING, ESSENTIALLY, AN
"EARTHQUAKE REFLECTOR,"
IMMEDIATELY ENDING
THE TREMORS.







"SAME OLD, SAME OLD.
I WAS EXPERIMENTING WITH
SOME KRYPTONITE.

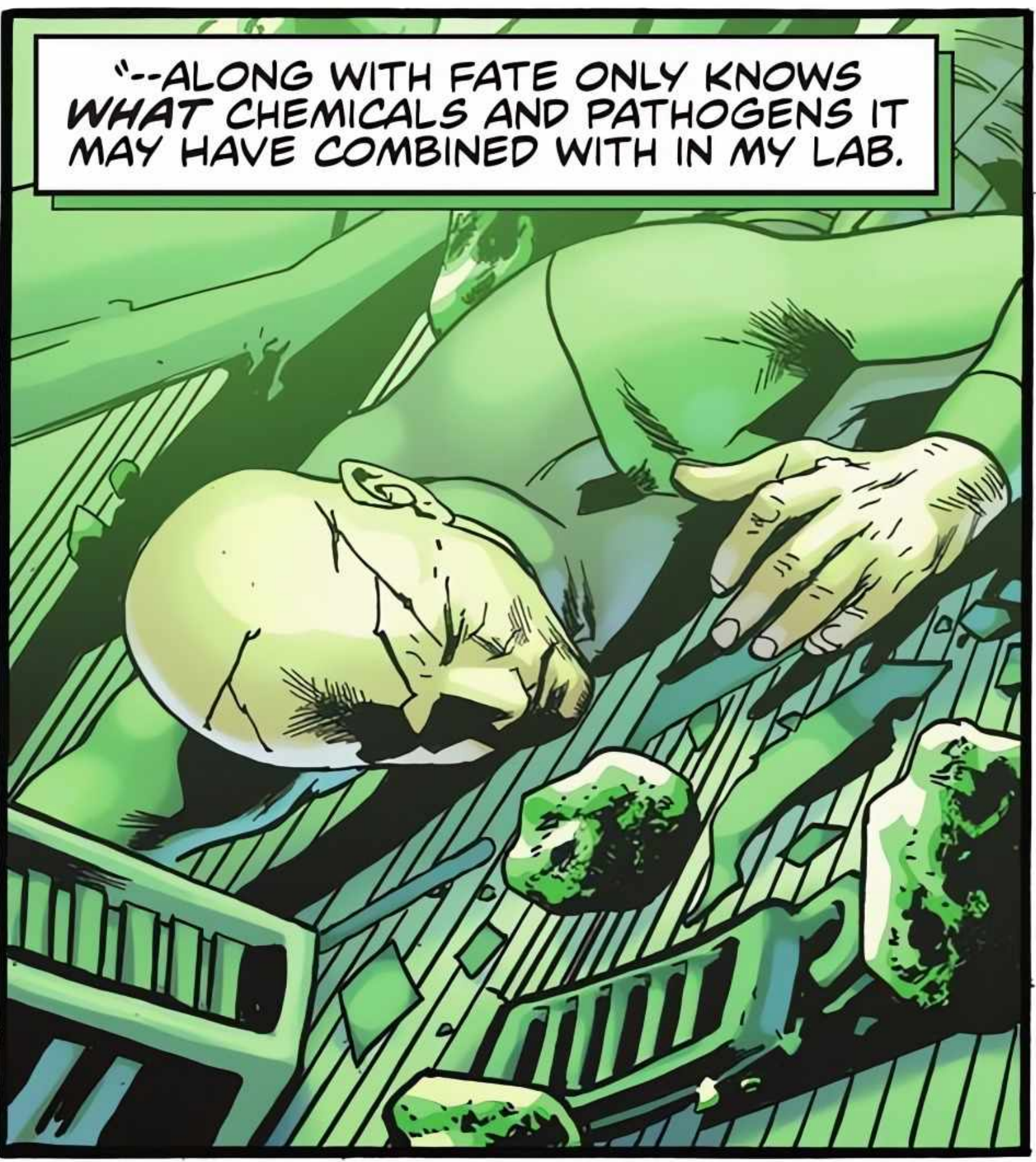
"YOU KNOW,
A TUESDAY.

"IT WAS THE GIFT OF A RECENT
METEOR SHOWER. I WAS
BOMBARDING IT WITH VARIOUS
FORMS OF RADIATION IN
HOPES OF GETTING RESULTS
I COULD SYNTHESIZE.



"IT **BACKFIRED**.
RATHER UNEXPECTEDLY,
AND RATHER **BADLY**.

"THE SAMPLE
SHATTERED. I WAS
BATHED IN A UNIQUE
COMBINATION OF RAYS
FROM UP AND DOWN THE
**ELECTROMAGNETIC
SPECTRUM--**

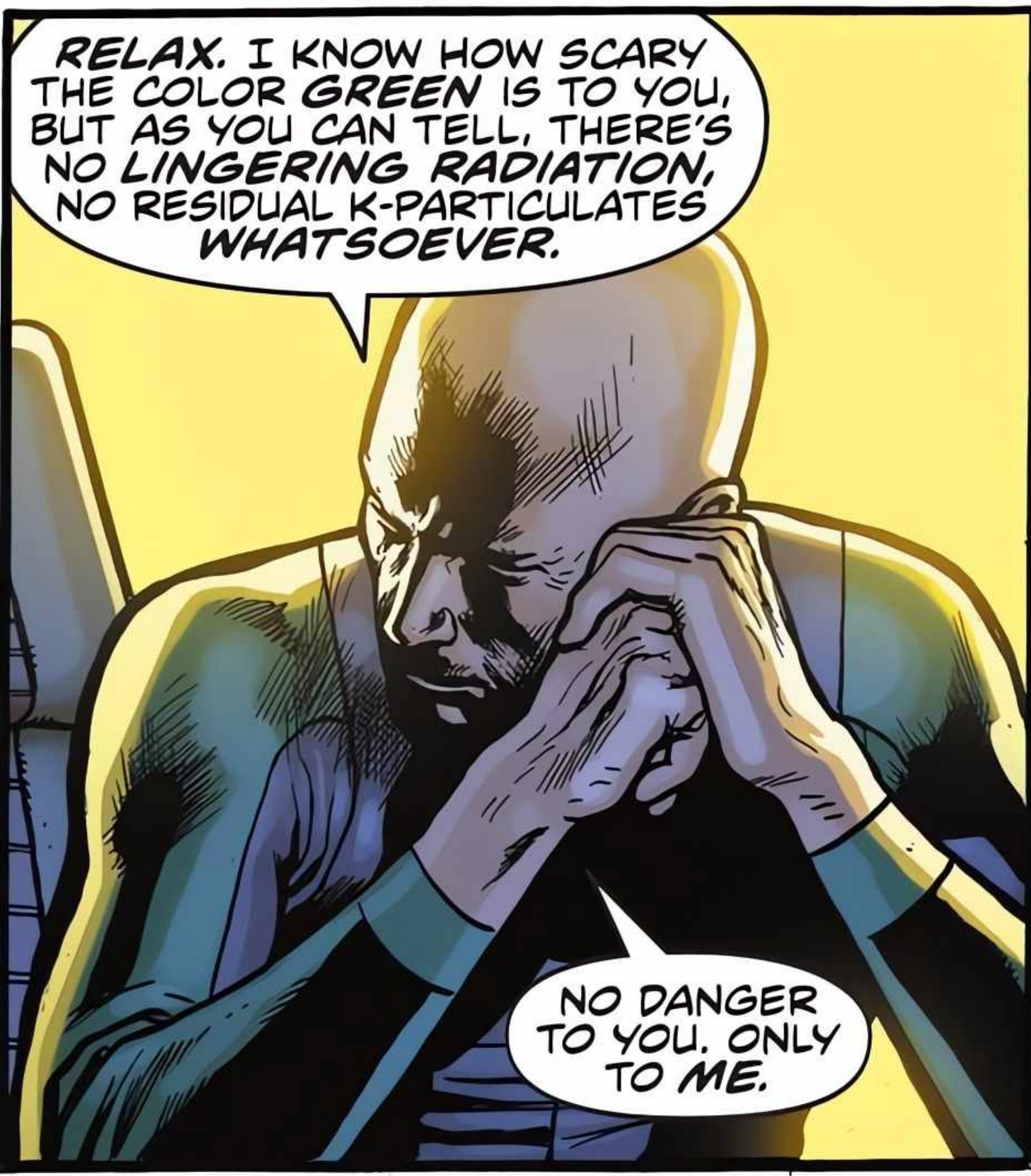


"--ALONG WITH FATE ONLY KNOWS
WHAT CHEMICALS AND PATHOGENS IT
MAY HAVE COMBINED WITH IN MY LAB.



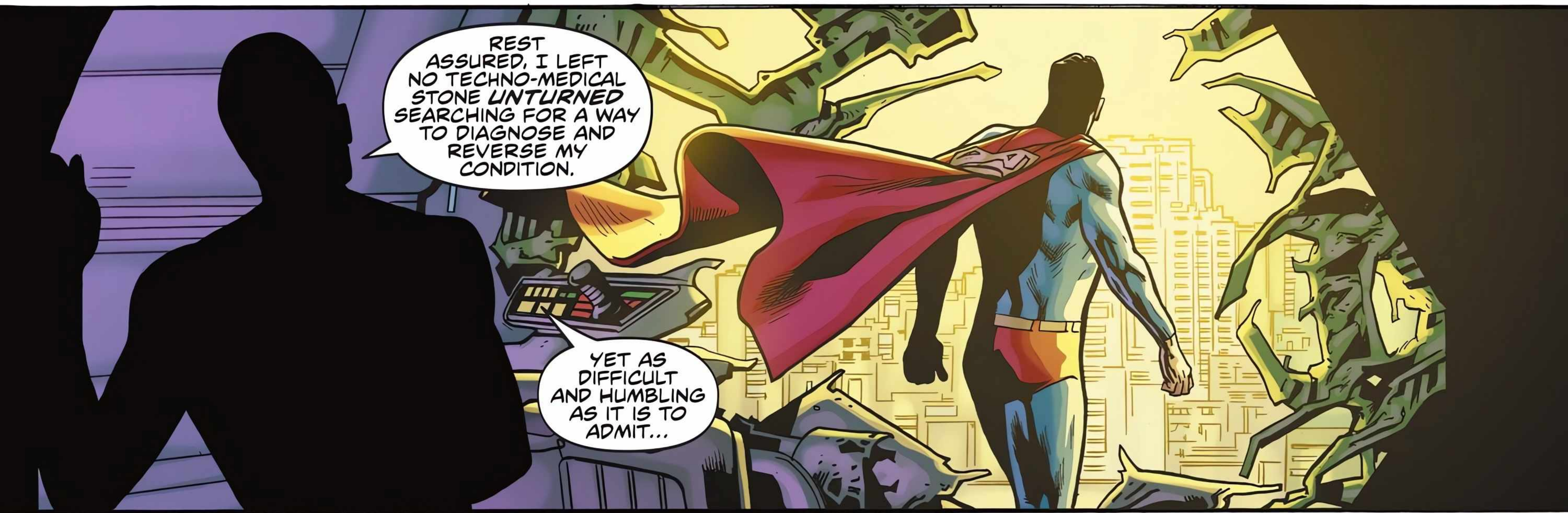
"WHEN I CAME TO,
AN EXHAUSTIVE ROUND
OF BLOOD WORK
CONFIRMED THE WORST.

"THE CELLS IN MY BODY
WERE **BURNING OUT**.



RELAX. I KNOW HOW SCARY
THE COLOR **GREEN** IS TO YOU,
BUT AS YOU CAN TELL, THERE'S
NO **LINGERING RADIATION**,
NO RESIDUAL K-PARTICULATES
WHATSOEVER.

NO DANGER
TO YOU. ONLY
TO ME.



REST ASSURED, I LEFT NO TECHNO-MEDICAL STONE UNTURNED SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO DIAGNOSE AND REVERSE MY CONDITION.

YET AS DIFFICULT AND HUMBLING AS IT IS TO ADMIT...

...THE GREATEST INTELLECT IN HUMAN HISTORY CAME UP WITH... NOTHING.



AT THE RATE I'M DETERIORATING, I ESTIMATE I HAVE, AT BEST, ONLY A FEW DAYS TO LIVE.



I'M... SORRY TO HEAR.



SEE? RIGHT THERE! THERE'S THAT SIGNATURE SUPERMAN COMPASSION! THE WHOLE WORLD'S GOING TO BE DANCING IN THE STREETS AT THIS NEWS, BUT NOT YOU.



AND THAT... THAT IS WHAT I'M BANKING ON.

THAT SUPERMAN WON'T LET ME DIE.



"IN OUR LONG HISTORY, YOU'VE CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATED MANY IRRATIONAL TRAITS, BUT ONLY ONE THAT'S LITTERLY UNFATHOMABLE TO ME.

"SUPERMAN ALWAYS ANSWERS CRIES FOR HELP.

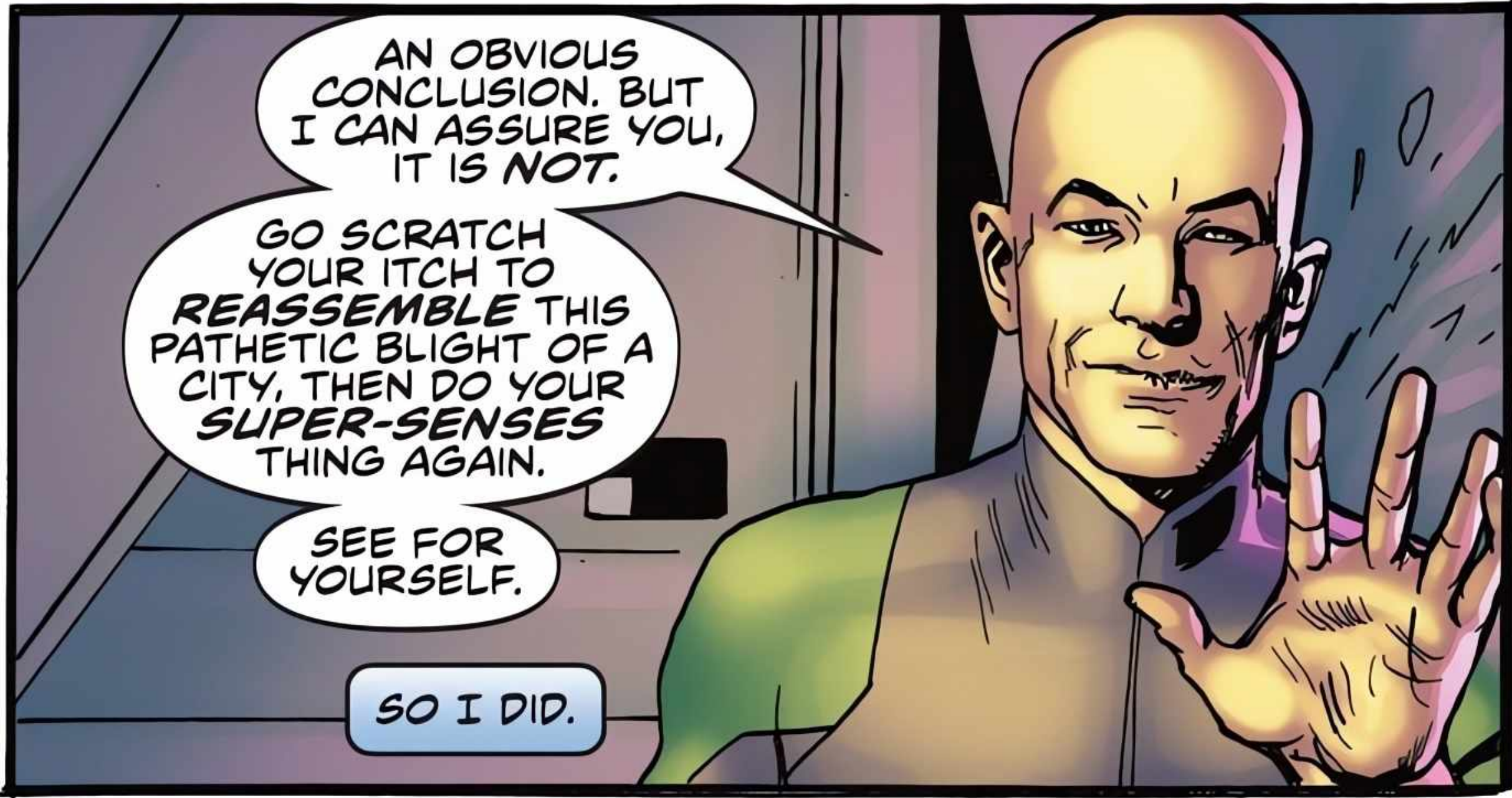
"SUPERMAN ALWAYS PUTS OTHERS FIRST. HE SAVES PEOPLE.

"SUPERMAN MADE A SOLEMN VOW TO HOLD ALL LIVES SACRED.

EVEN MINE.



THIS IS A TRAP.

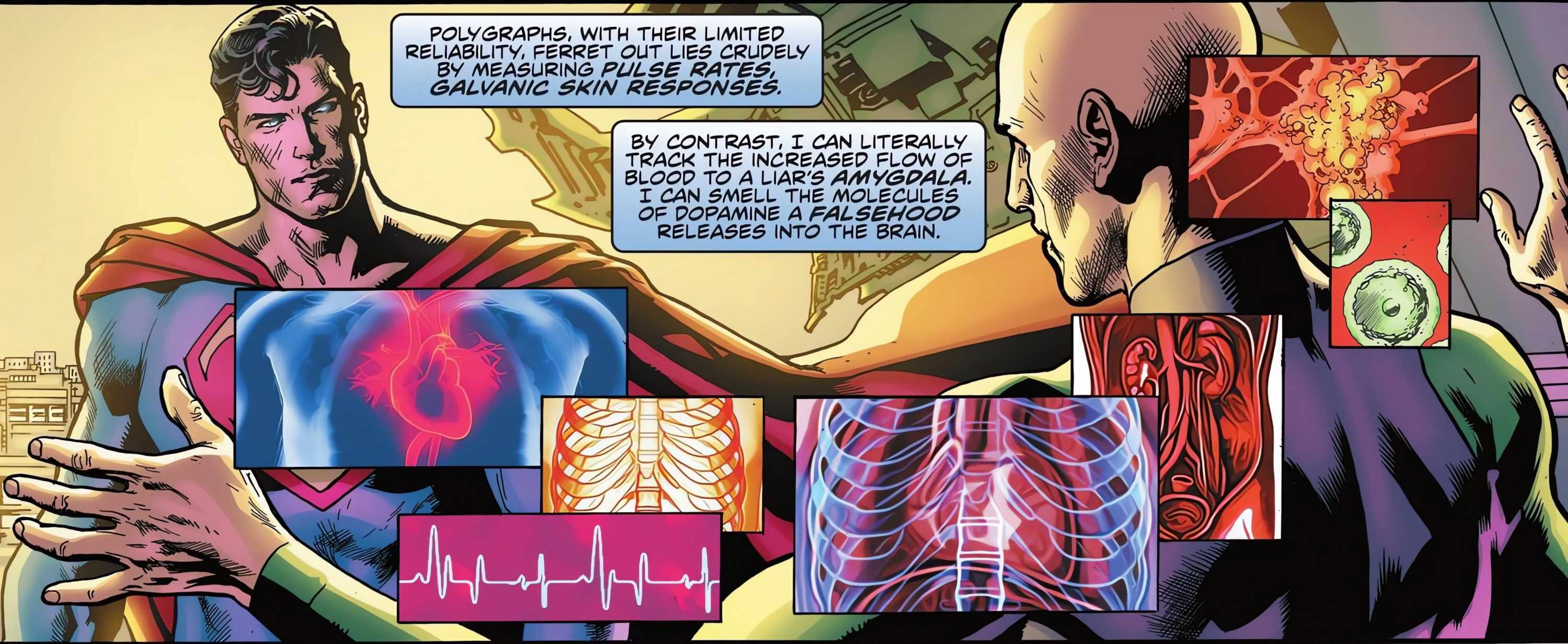


AN OBVIOUS CONCLUSION. BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU, IT IS NOT.

GO SCRATCH YOUR ITCH TO REASSEMBLE THIS PATHETIC BLIGHT OF A CITY, THEN DO YOUR SUPER-SENSES THING AGAIN.

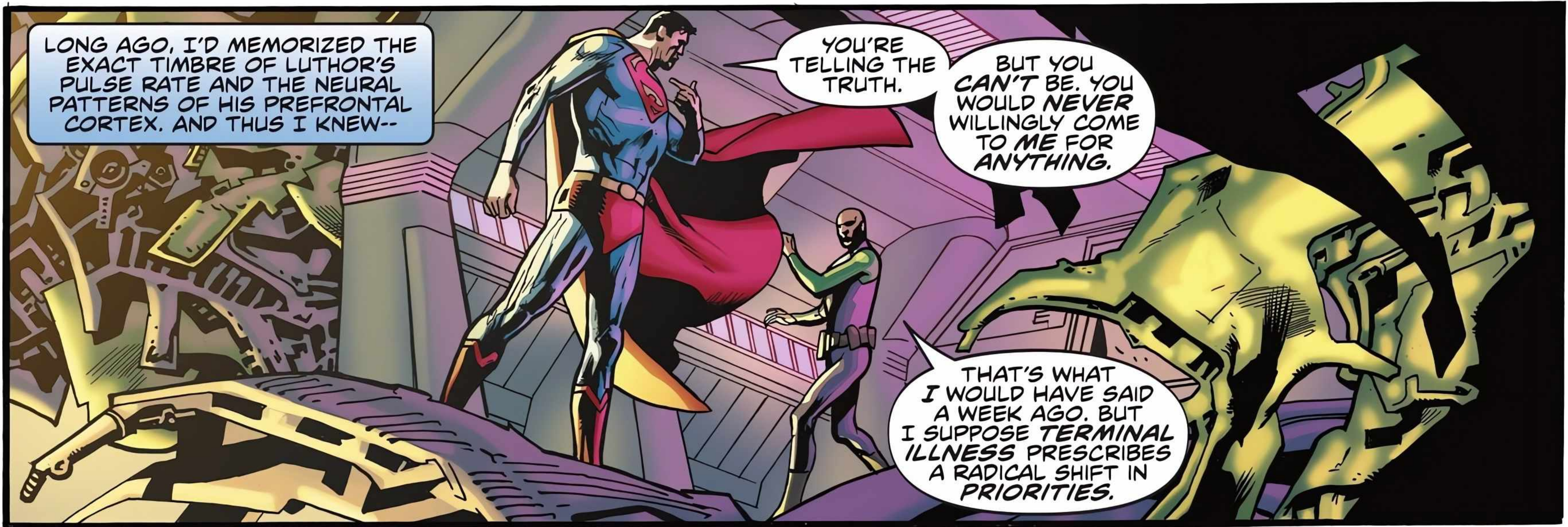
SEE FOR YOURSELF.

SO I DID.



POLYGRAPHS, WITH THEIR LIMITED RELIABILITY, FERRET OUT LIES CRUDELY BY MEASURING PULSE RATES, GALVANIC SKIN RESPONSES.

BY CONTRAST, I CAN LITERALLY TRACK THE INCREASED FLOW OF BLOOD TO A LIAR'S AMYGDALA. I CAN SMELL THE MOLECULES OF DOPAMINE A FALSEHOOD RELEASES INTO THE BRAIN.



LONG AGO, I'D MEMORIZED THE EXACT TIMBRE OF LUTHOR'S PULSE RATE AND THE NEURAL PATTERNS OF HIS PREFRONTAL CORTEX. AND THUS I KNEW--

YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH.

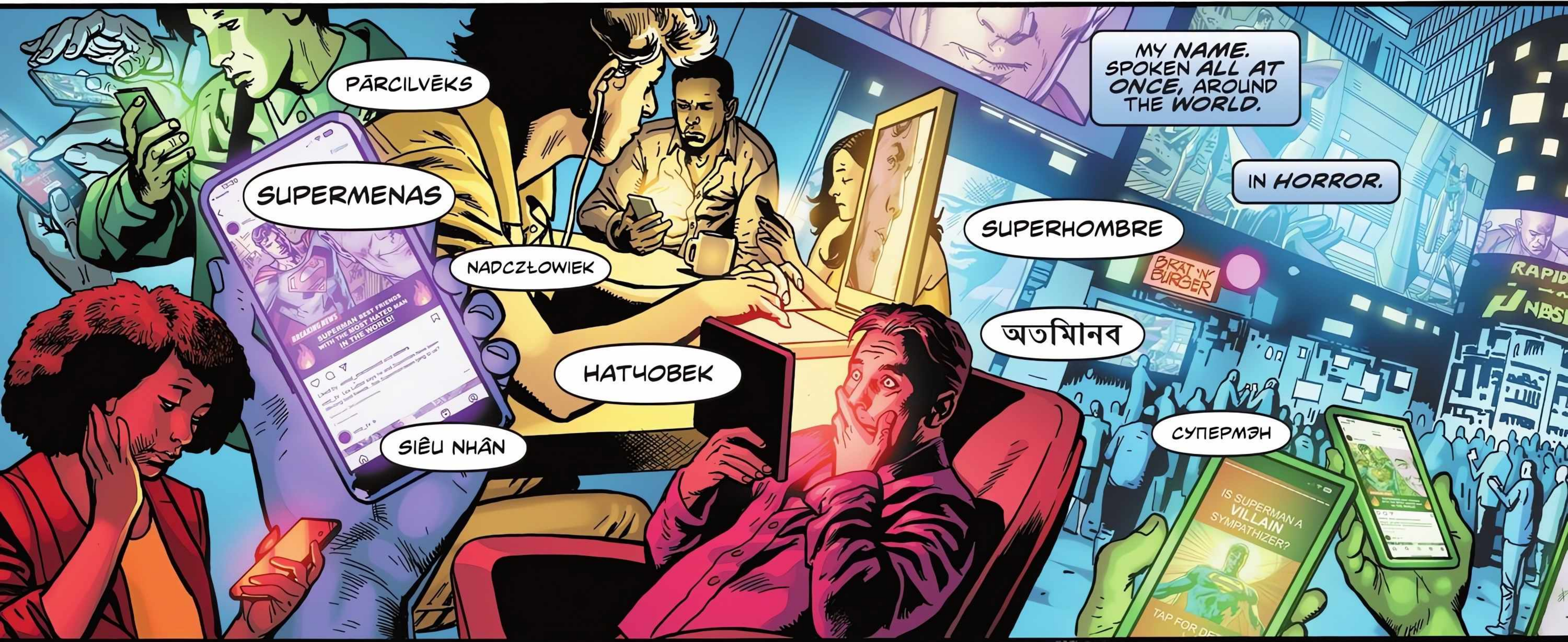
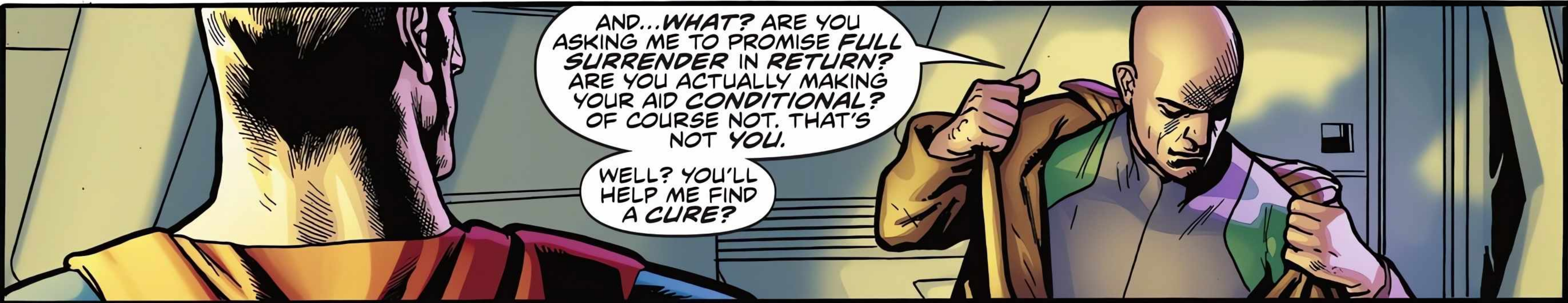
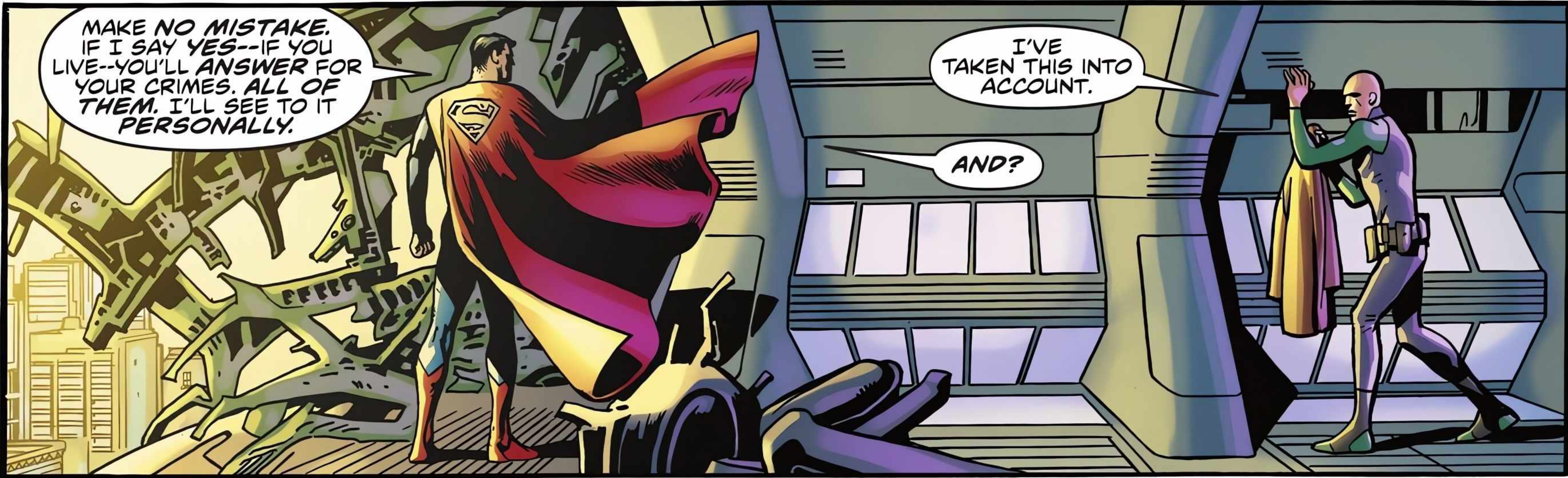
BUT YOU CAN'T BE. YOU WOULD NEVER WILLINGLY COME TO ME FOR ANYTHING.

THAT'S WHAT I WOULD HAVE SAID A WEEK AGO. BUT I SUPPOSE TERMINAL ILLNESS PRESCRIBES A RADICAL SHIFT IN PRIORITIES.



I'M WILLING TO LOWER MYSELF TO INDEBTEDNESS TO MY WORST ENEMY FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, AND MOST CRITICALLY, AT THE END OF THE DAY...

...I REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE A UNIVERSE WITHOUT ME IN IT.







Smallville.
Long ago.

THOUGH LUTHOR
COULD NOT HAVE
KNOWN IT.

HEY! WE'RE
TALKIN' TO YOU,
FREAKAZOID!

LOOKIT THE
NEW KID! CAN'T EVEN
HOLD ON T' HIS WIDDLE
SCHOOLBOOKS!



WELL? PICK 'EM
UP!

I DON'T
NEED THEM. I ONLY
CARRY THEM SO YOU
PEOPLE WON'T FEEL
LIKE MORONS.

OH
YEAH?
YOU--



FWUMP

LEX.
RUN!



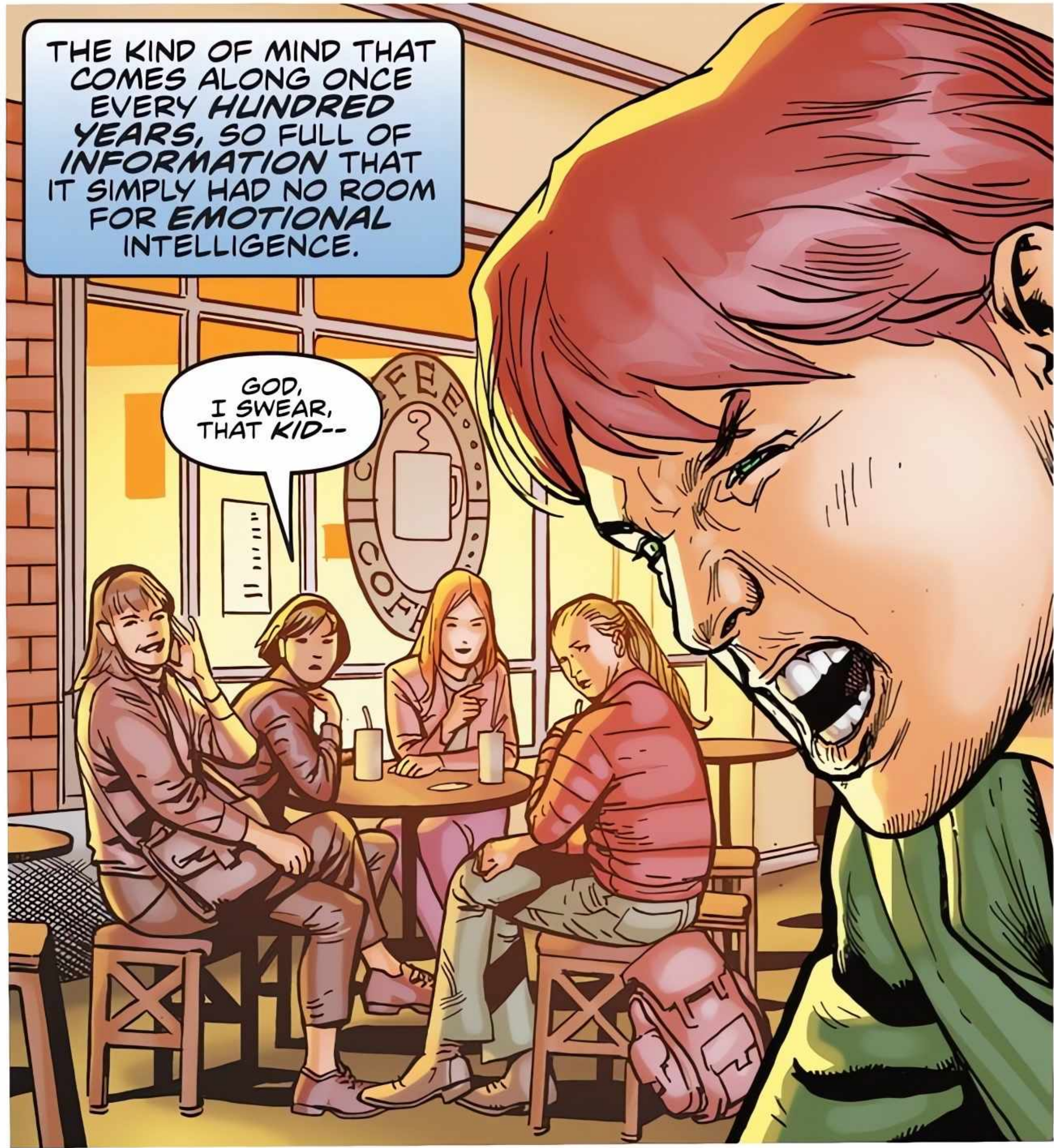
WELL.
IF IT ISN'T OLD
MACDONALD.

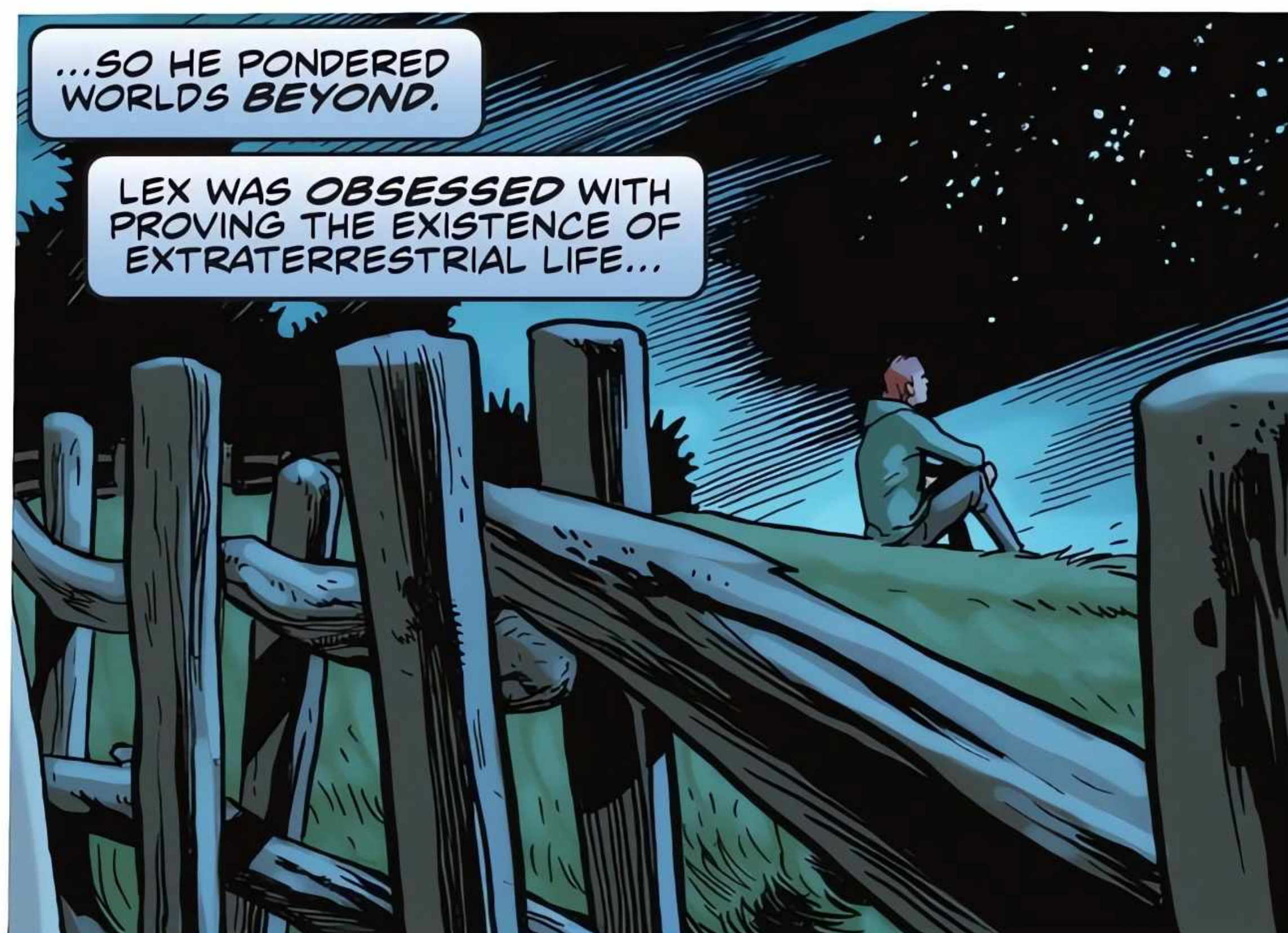
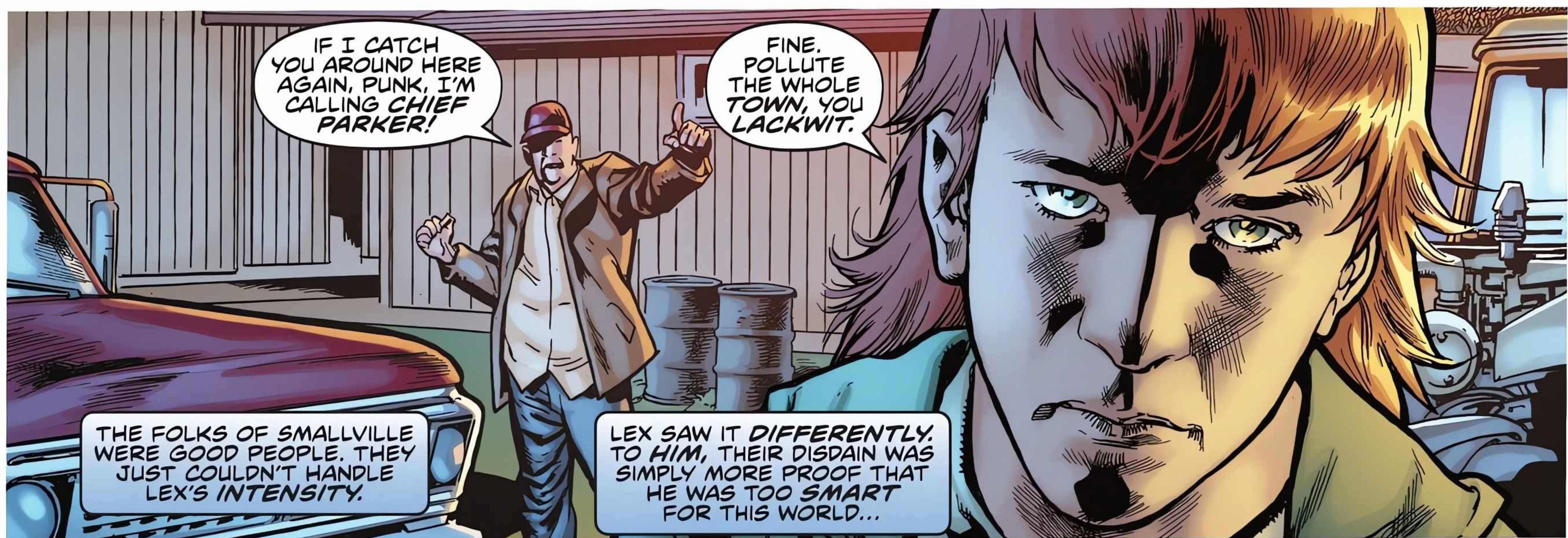
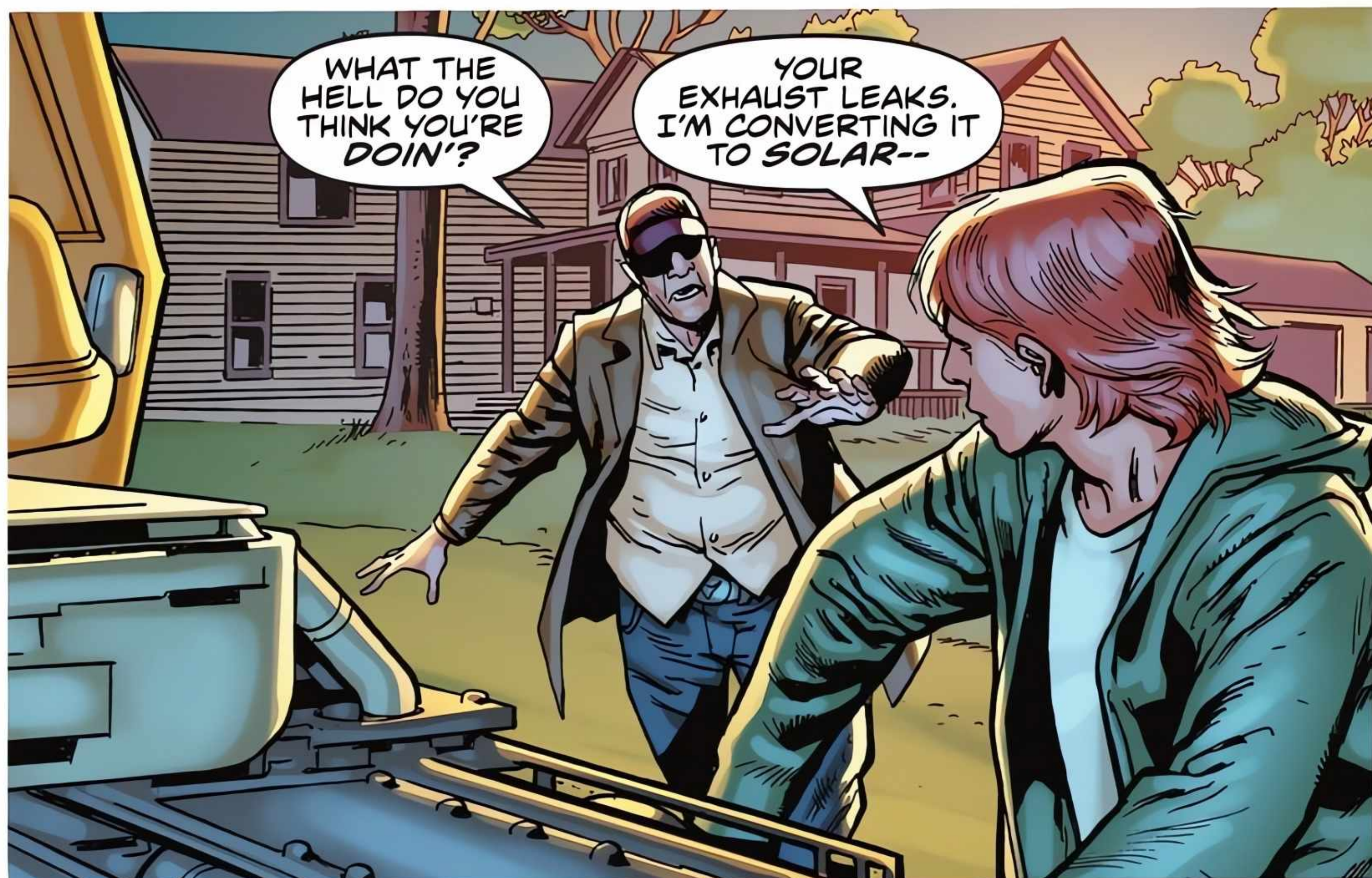
E-I-E-I-O.

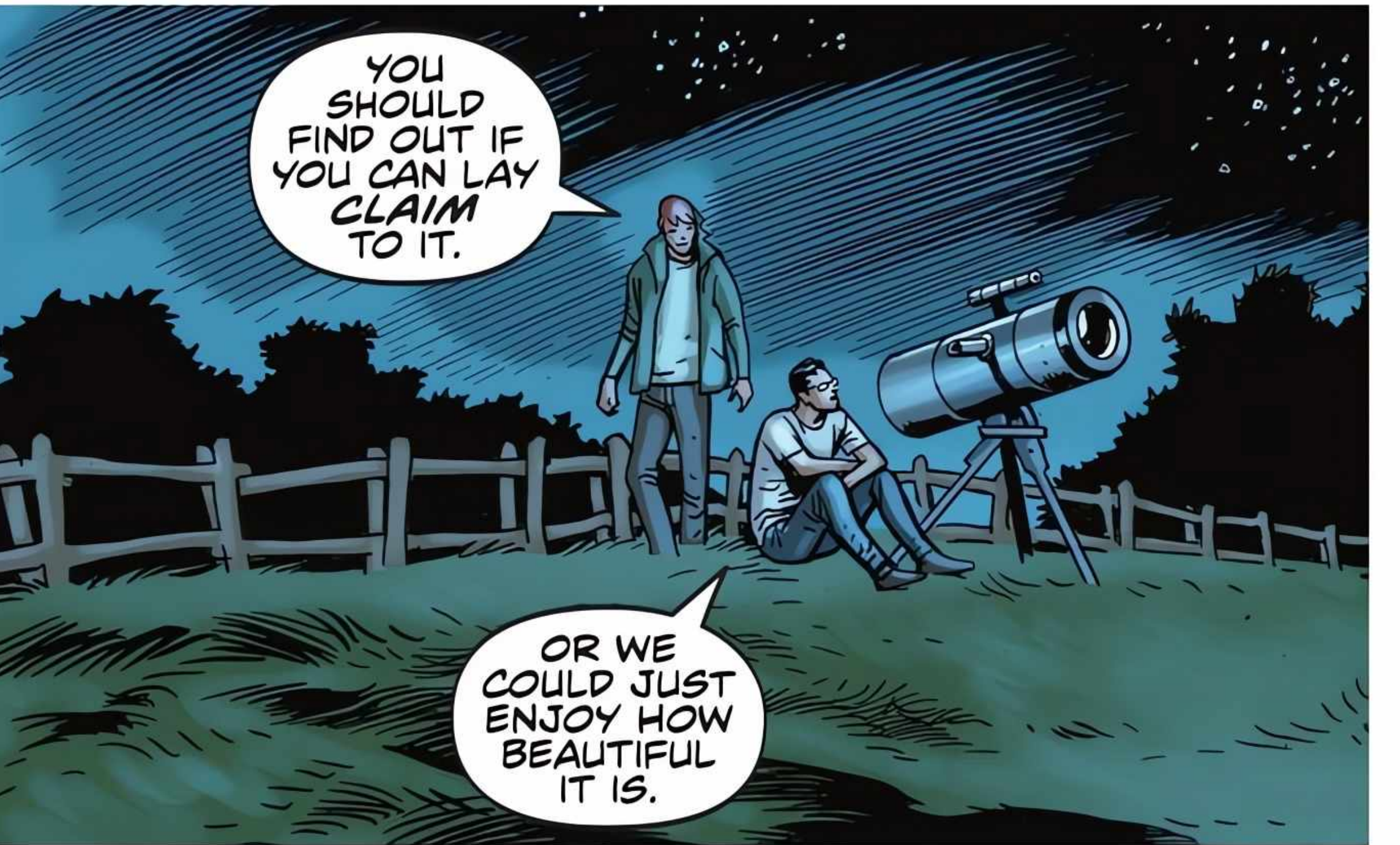
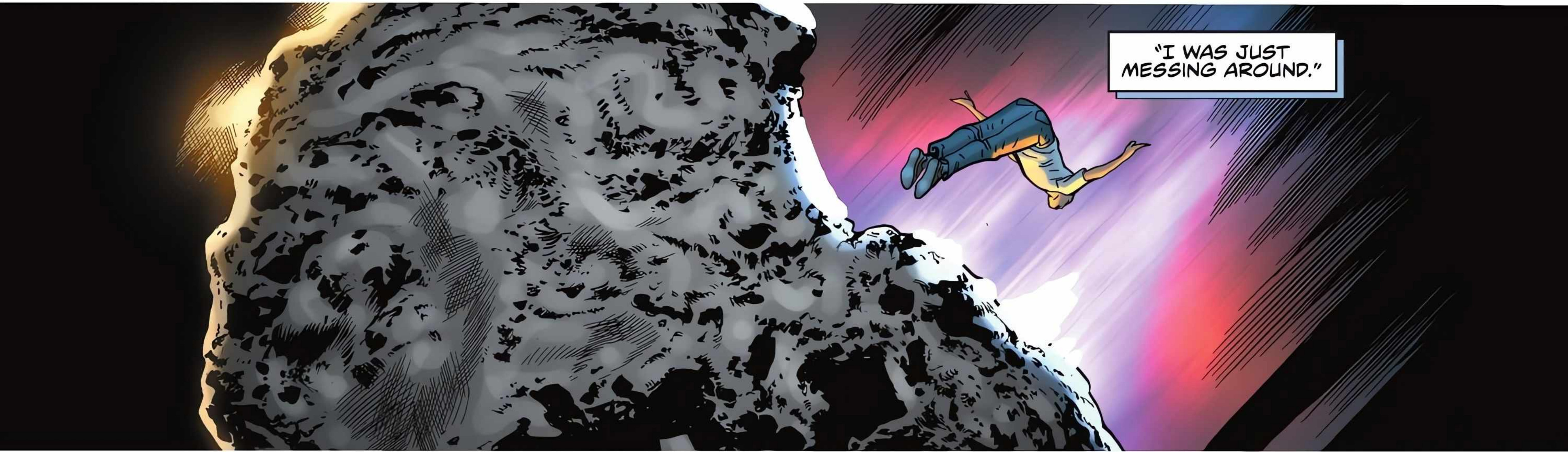
GUESS
THE SNOW
WAS HEAVIER
THAN IT LOOKED.
LEX. BOY, YOU
GOT LUCKY.
THEY--

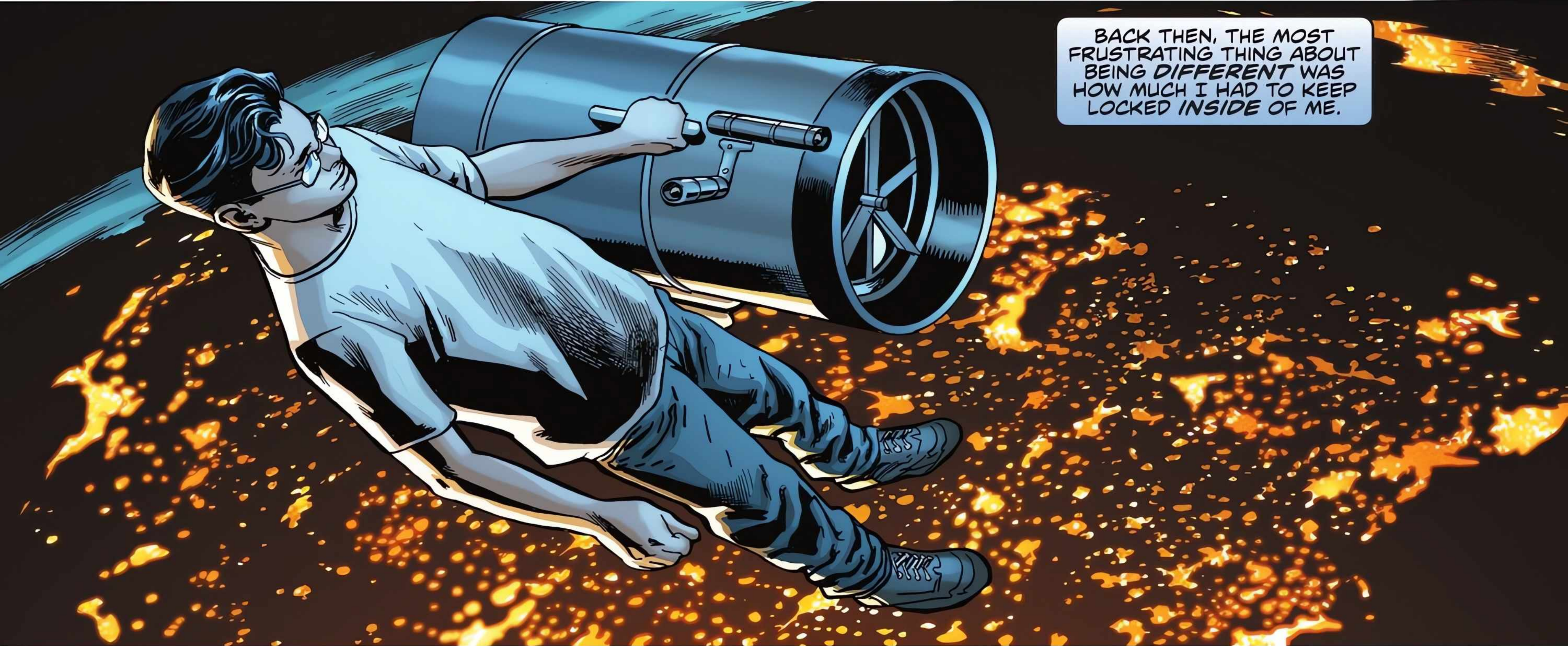


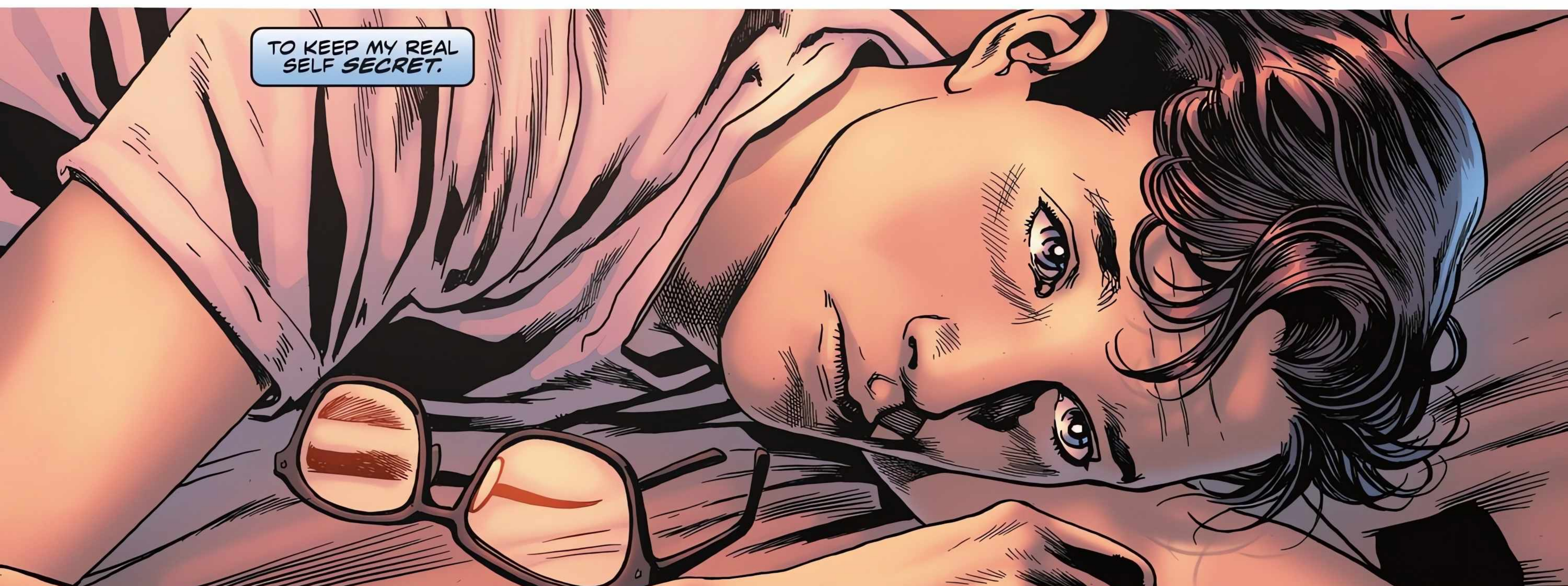
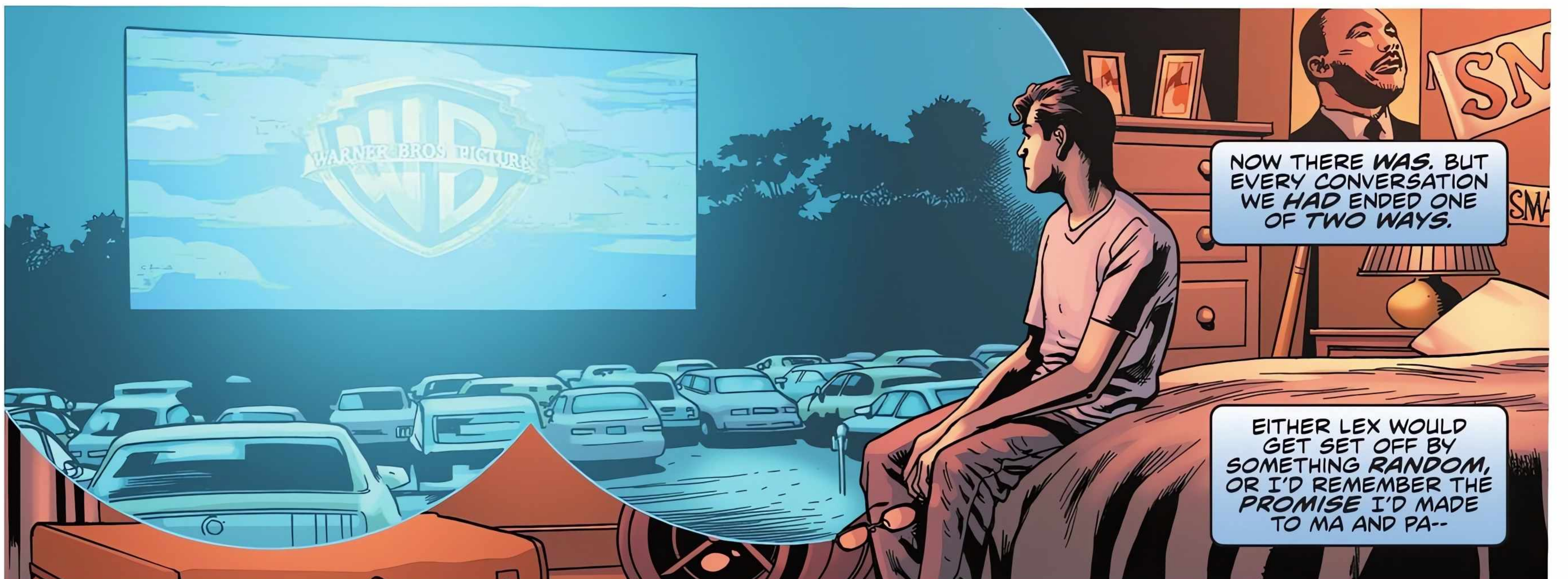
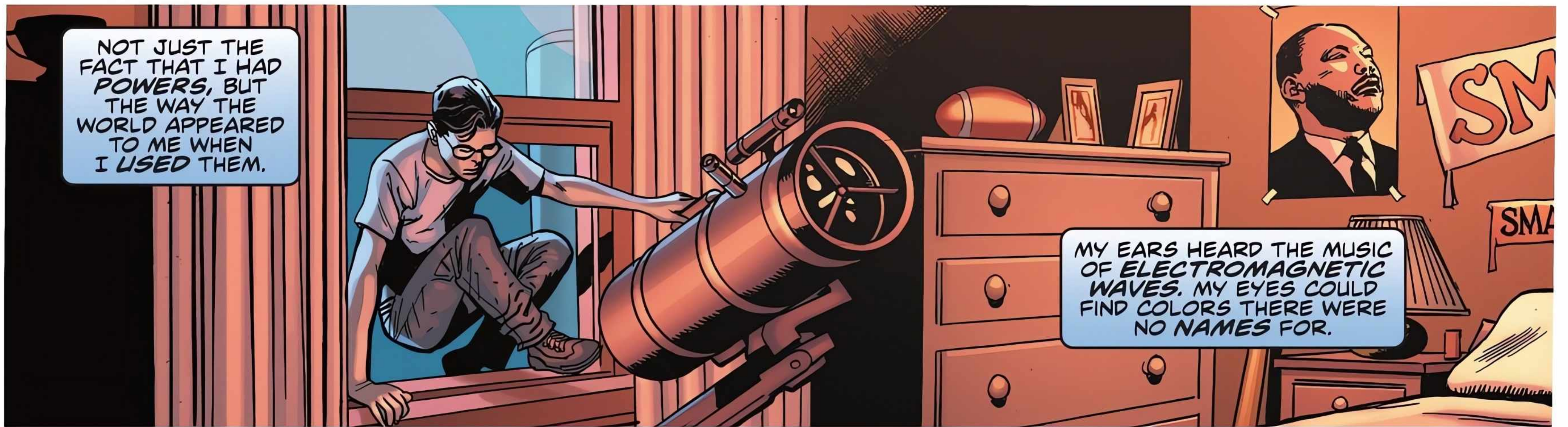
THEY THINK I'M A
FREAK TODAY, KENT.
THEY'LL THINK IT
TOMORROW. NOTHING
CHANGES.

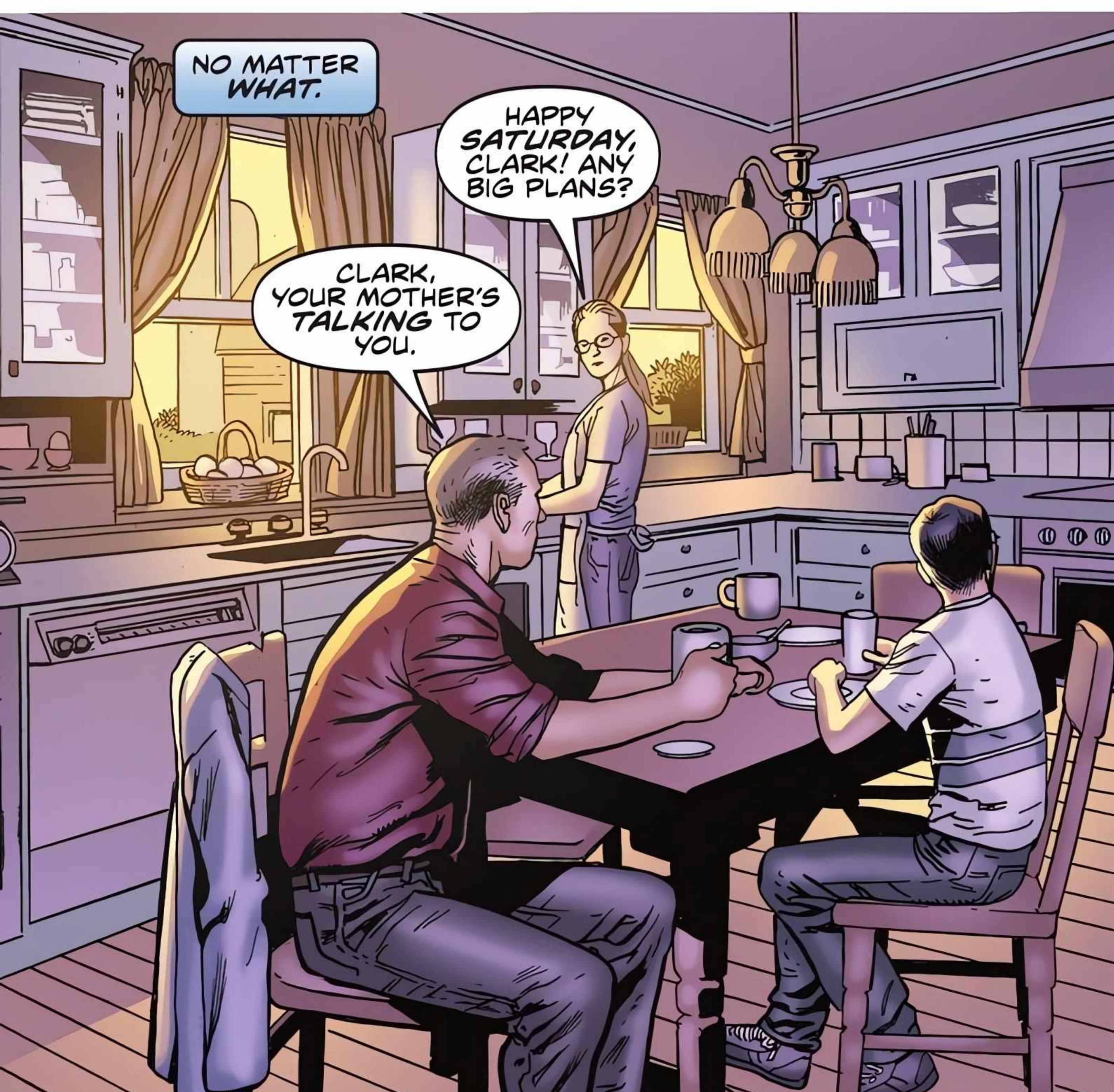














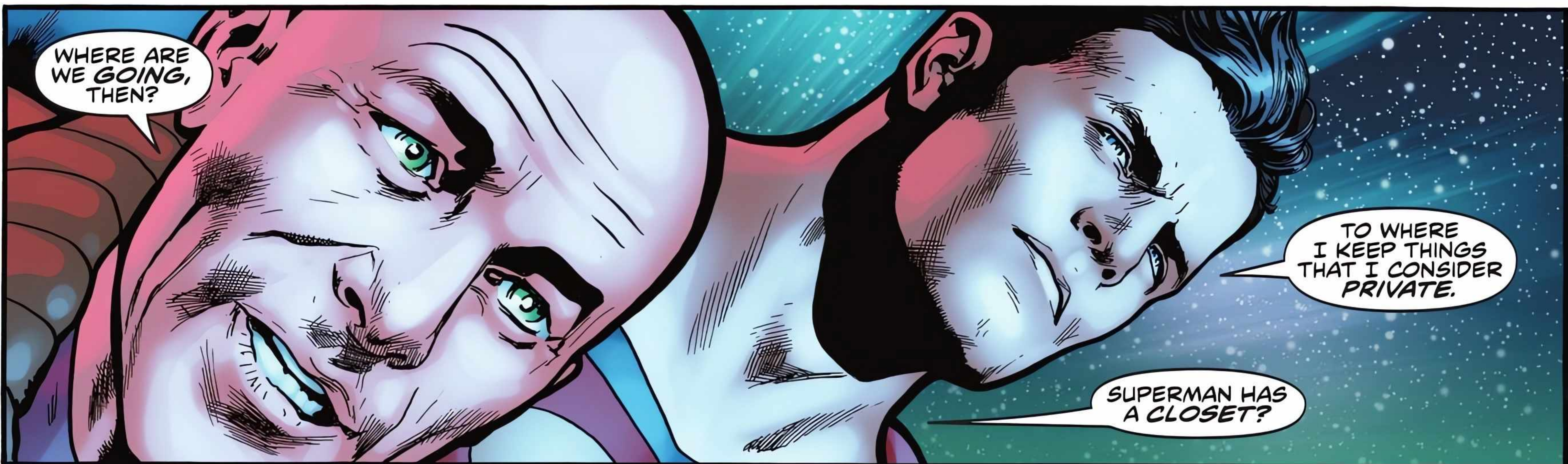
--I DON'T LOVE BEING TWENTY THOUSAND FEET IN THE AIR WHEN YOUR MIND WANDERS.

I'M ALSO UNACCUSTOMED TO NOT BEING THE CENTER OF YOUR ATTENTION, AND IT'S UNNERVING.



"IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT MR. AND MRS. METROPOLIS THINK OF ALL THIS--"

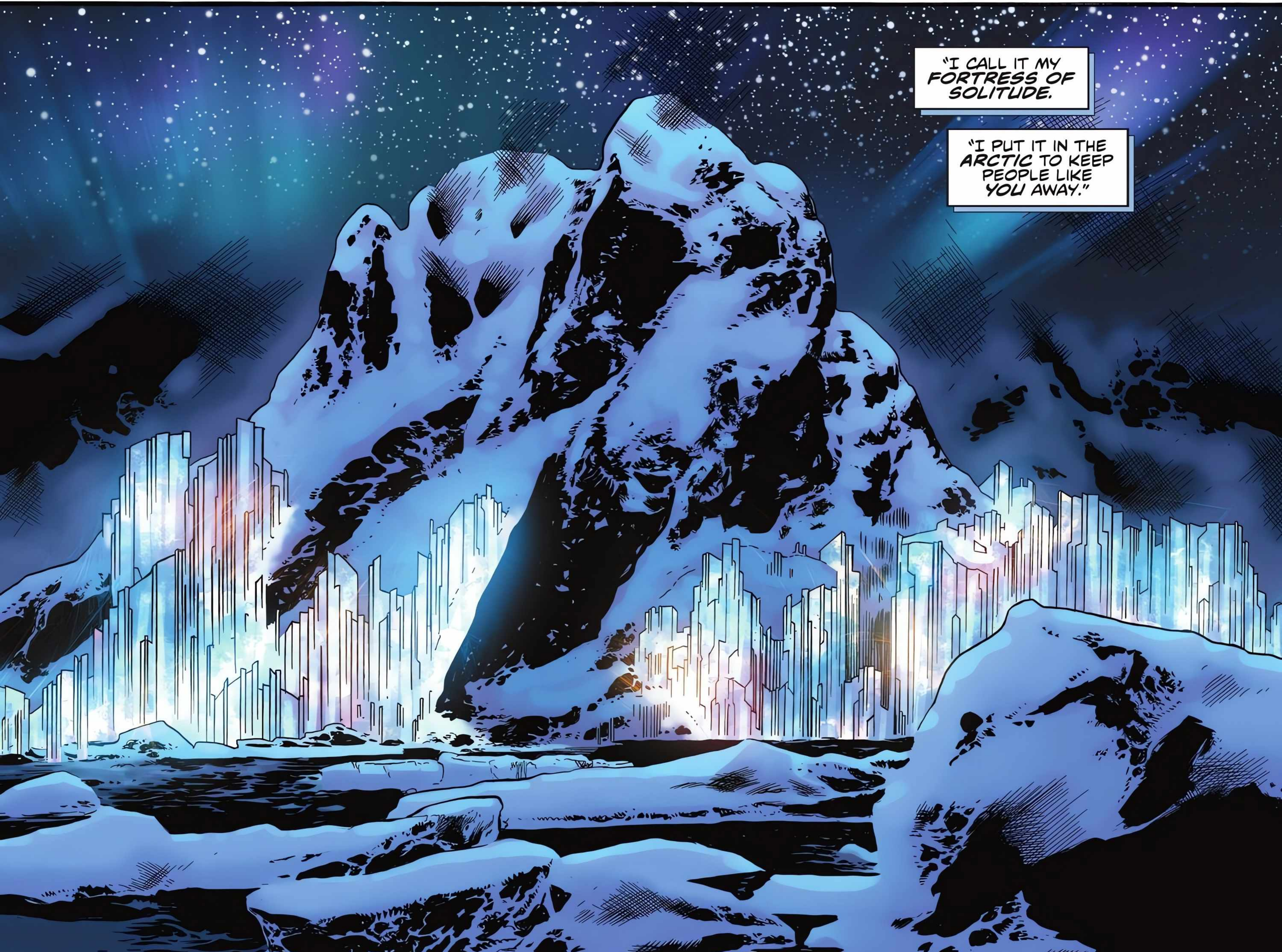
"IT'S NOT RELEVANT. A MISSION'S A MISSION."



WHERE ARE WE GOING, THEN?

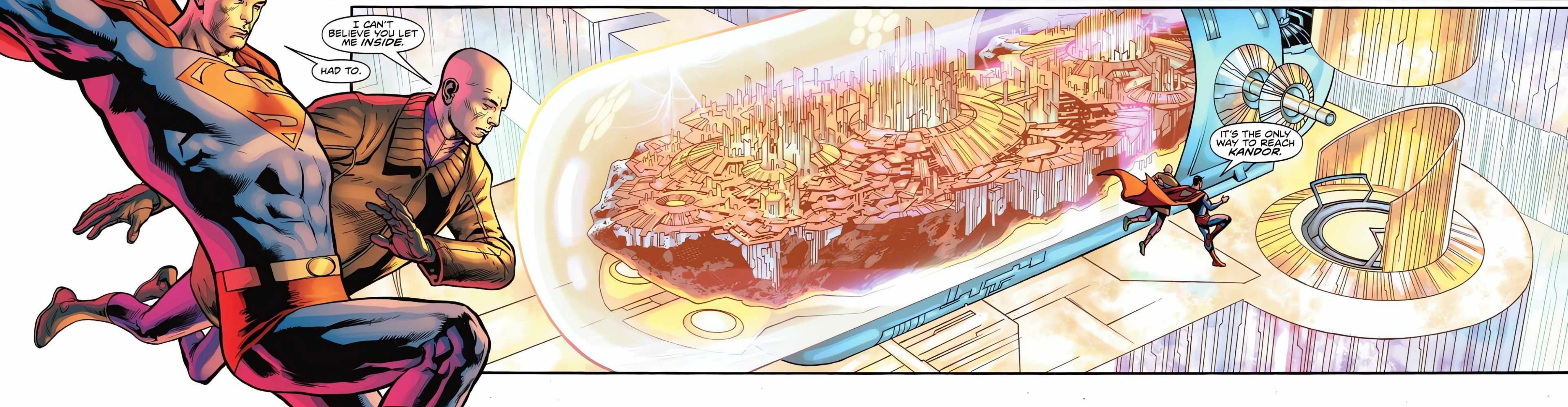
TO WHERE I KEEP THINGS THAT I CONSIDER PRIVATE.

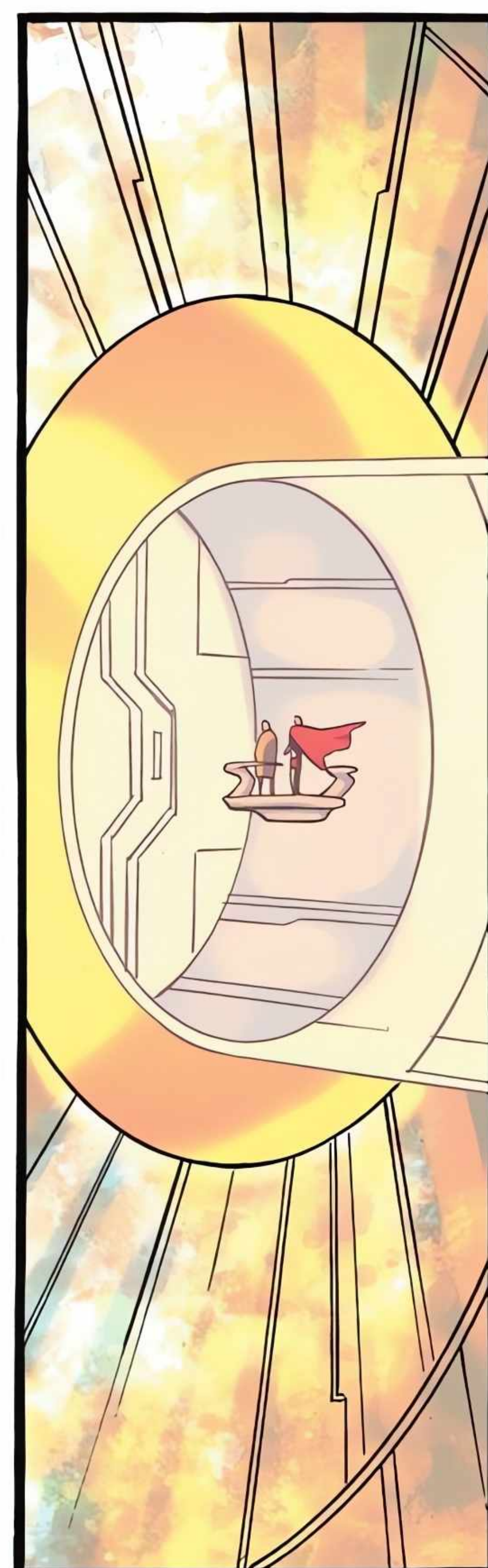
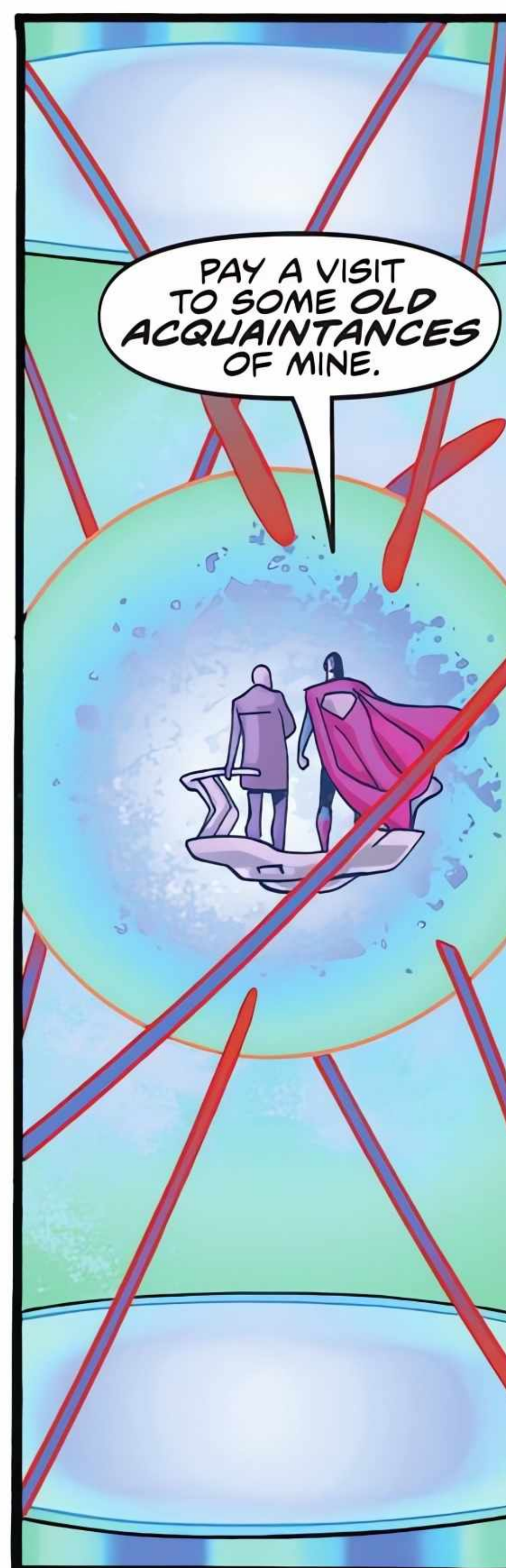
SUPERMAN HAS A CLOSET?

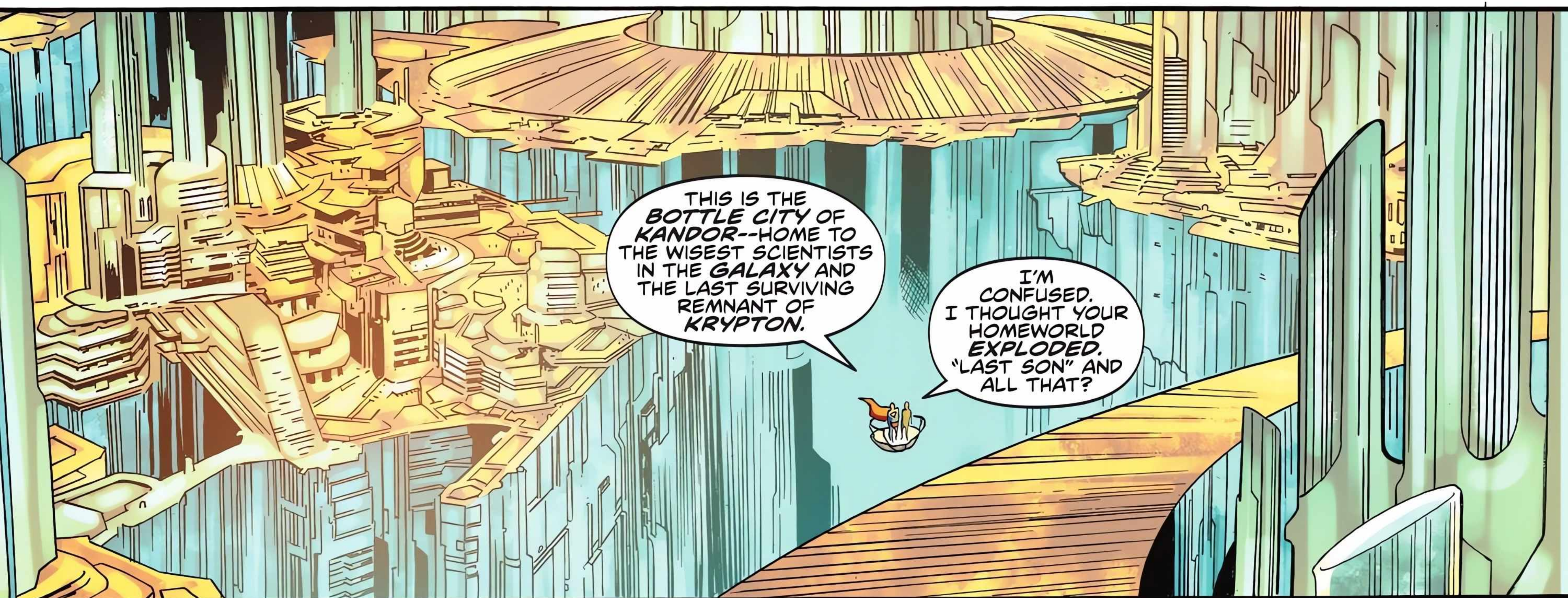


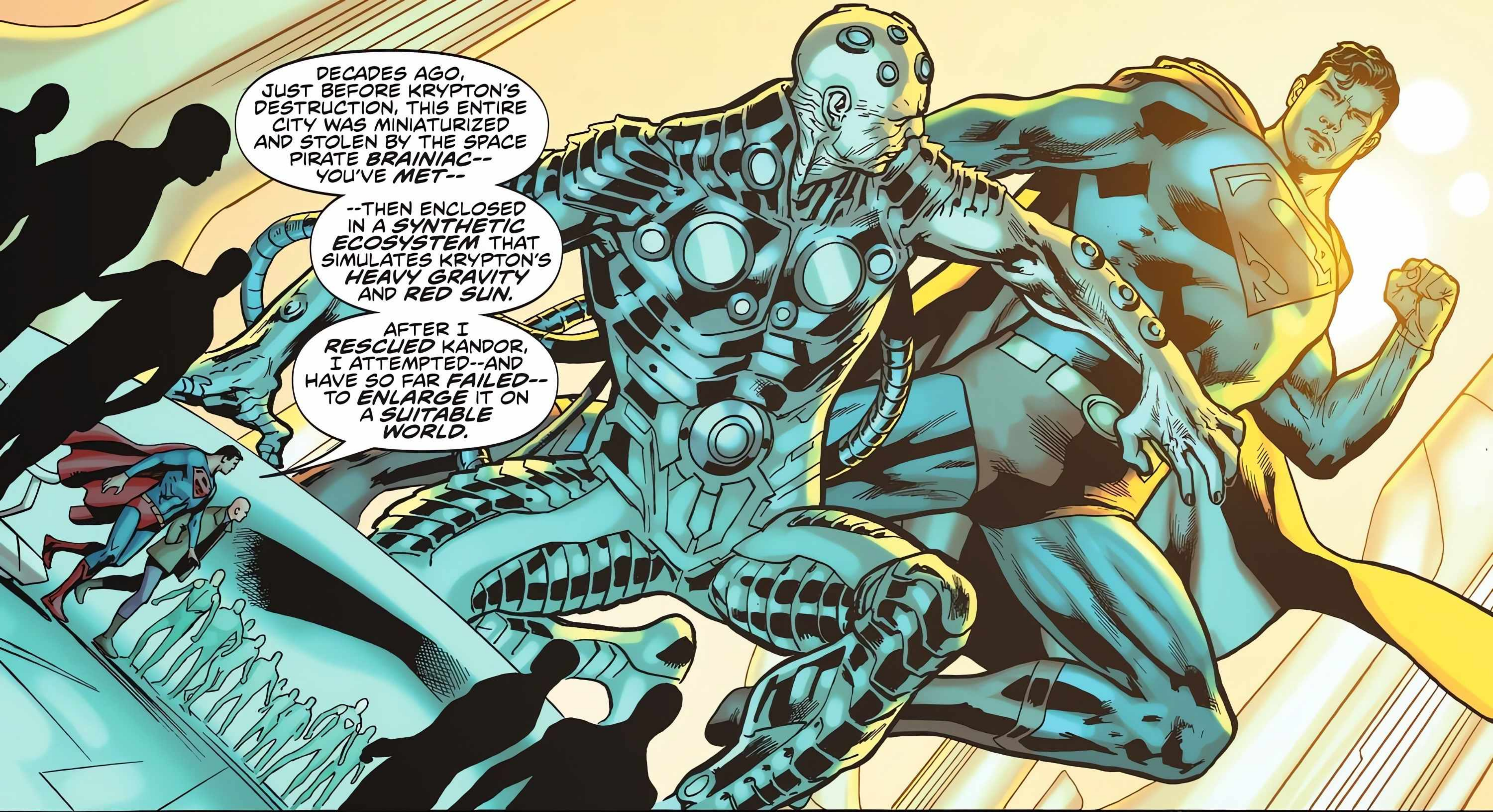
"I CALL IT MY FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE."

"I PUT IT IN THE ARCTIC TO KEEP PEOPLE LIKE YOU AWAY."









DECADES AGO,
JUST BEFORE KRYPTON'S
DESTRUCTION, THIS ENTIRE
CITY WAS MINIATURIZED
AND STOLEN BY THE SPACE
PIRATE **BRAINIAC**--
YOU'VE MET--

--THEN ENCLOSED
IN A **SYNTHETIC
ECOSYSTEM** THAT
SIMULATES KRYPTON'S
HEAVY GRAVITY
AND **RED SUN**.

AFTER I
RESCUED KANDOR,
I ATTEMPTED--AND
HAVE SO FAR **FAILED**--
TO **ENLARGE IT** ON
A **SUITABLE**
WORLD.



IN THE MEANTIME,
BECAUSE ITS
INHABITANTS HAVE NO
POWERS HERE, IT'S
SAFEST IN THE
FORTRESS.

NO YELLOW SUN...
YOU'RE **POWERLESS**
RIGHT NOW? YOU MEAN,
I COULD KILL YOU WHERE
YOU **STAND**?

YOU
COULD
TRY.

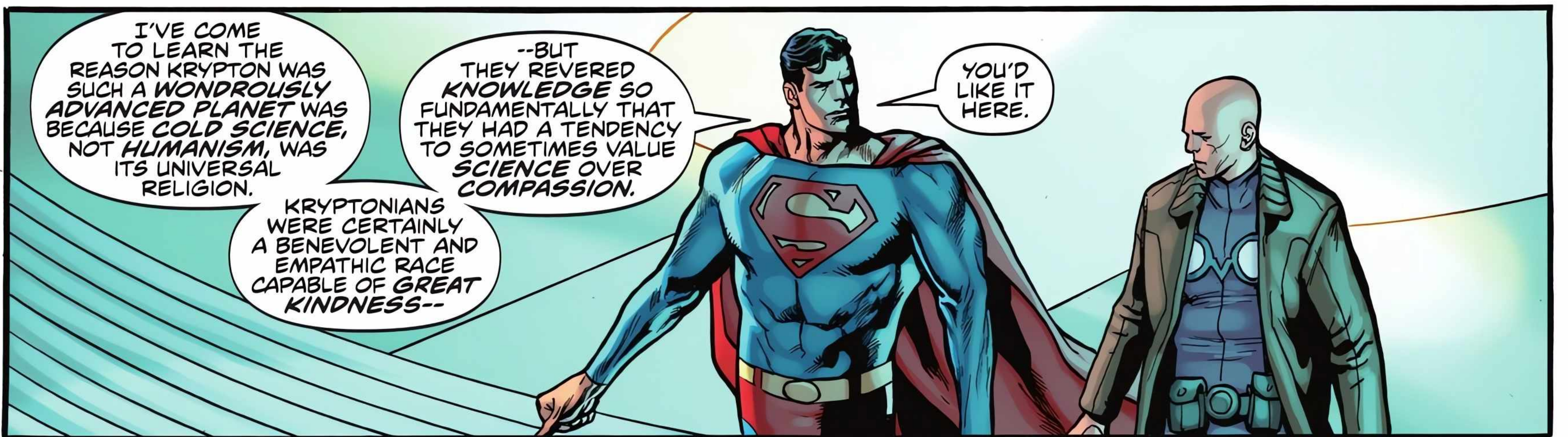


THAT'S WHY
YOU KEEP IT HERE?
COME ON. YOU JUST
LIKE HAVING IT HANDY
FOR WHEN YOU GET
HOMESICK.

NOT
ESPECIALLY.
AT FIRST, I WAS
EAGER TO EXPLORE
MY PEOPLE'S
CULTURE...

...BUT DESPITE
MY **PROTESTATIONS**,
THE **KANDORIANS** HOLD
THEIR "**LIBERATOR**" SO
RIDICULOUSLY IN AWE
THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
TO EFFECTIVELY
ASSIMILATE.

THERE'S
SOMETHING
ELSE, AS
WELL.

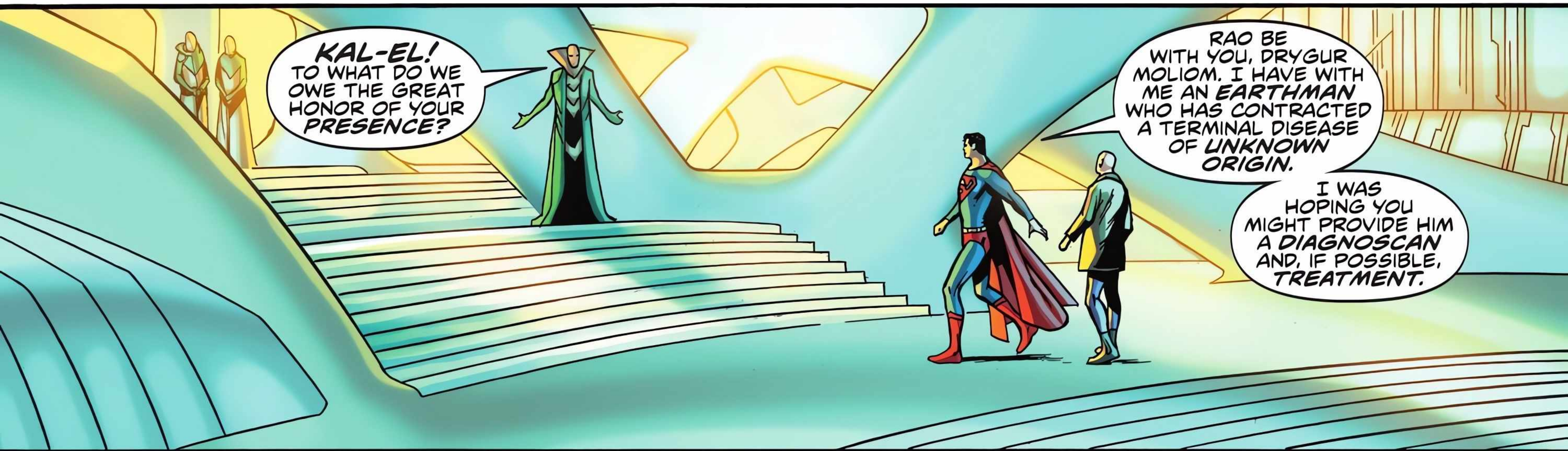


I'VE COME
TO LEARN THE
REASON KRYPTON WAS
SUCH A **WONDROUSLY
ADVANCED** PLANET WAS
BECAUSE **COLD SCIENCE**,
NOT **HUMANISM**, WAS
ITS UNIVERSAL
RELIGION.

--BUT
THEY REVERED
KNOWLEDGE SO
FUNDAMENTALLY THAT
THEY HAD A TENDENCY
TO SOMETIMES VALUE
SCIENCE OVER
COMPASSION.

KRYPTONIANS
WERE CERTAINLY
A **BENEVOLENT** AND
EMPATHIC RACE
CAPABLE OF **GREAT
KINDNESS**--

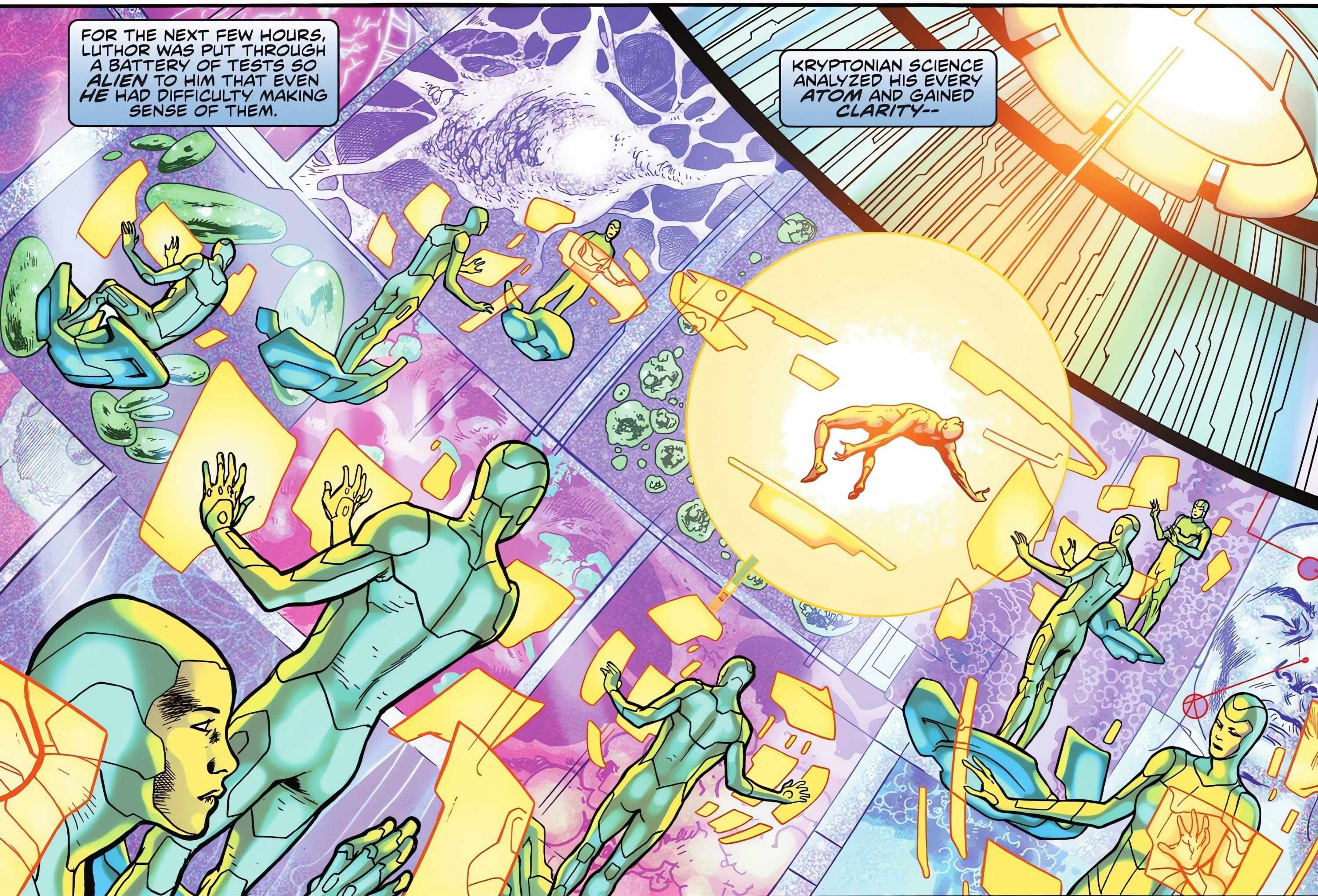
YOU'D
LIKE IT
HERE.



KAL-EL!
TO WHAT DO WE
OWE THE GREAT
HONOR OF YOUR
PRESENCE?

RAO BE
WITH YOU, DRYGUR
MOLIOM. I HAVE WITH
ME AN EARTHMAN
WHO HAS CONTRACTED
A TERMINAL DISEASE
OF UNKNOWN
ORIGIN.

I WAS
HOPING YOU
MIGHT PROVIDE HIM
A DIAGNOSCAN
AND, IF POSSIBLE,
TREATMENT.



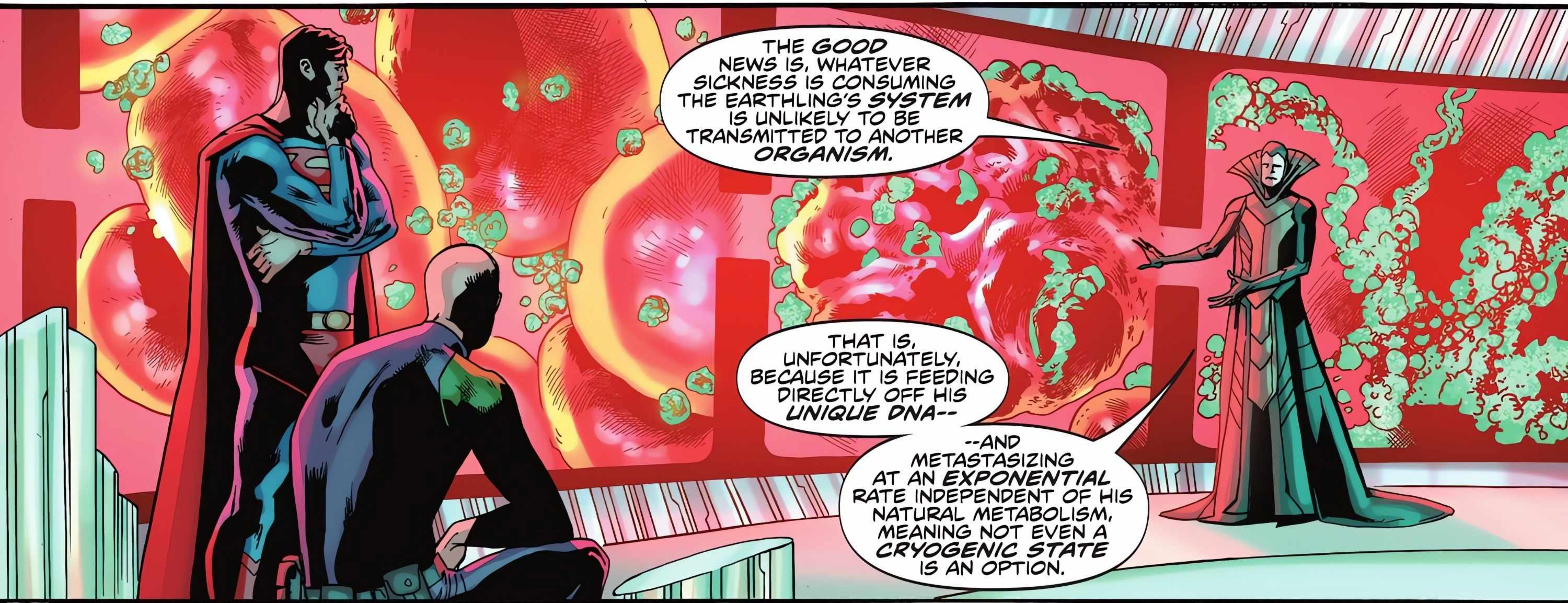
FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS,
LUTHOR WAS PUT THROUGH
A BATTERY OF TESTS SO
ALIEN TO HIM THAT EVEN
HE HAD DIFFICULTY MAKING
SENSE OF THEM.

KRYPTONIAN SCIENCE
ANALYZED HIS EVERY
ATOM AND GAINED
CLARITY--



--BUT NOT
ENOUGH
OF IT.

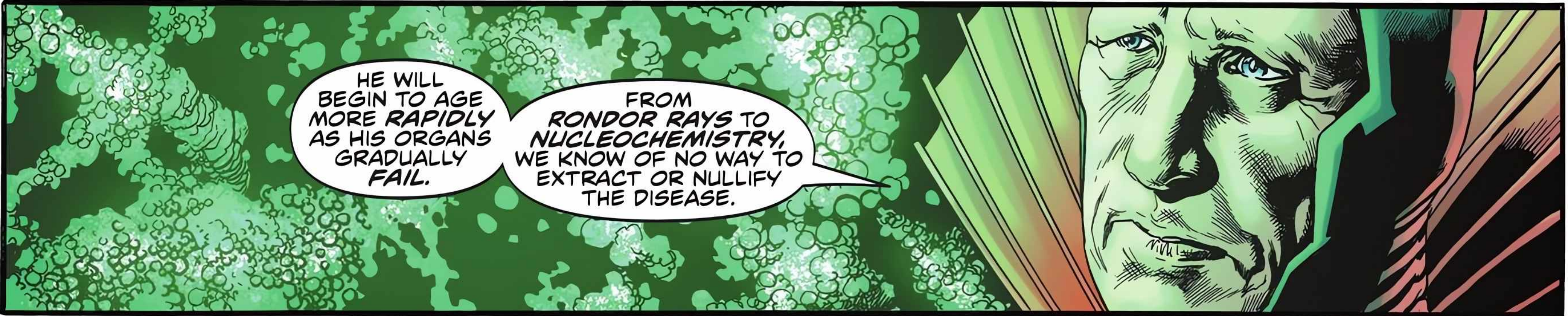
WE CAN
FIND NO
CURE.



THE GOOD NEWS IS, WHATEVER SICKNESS IS CONSUMING THE EARTHLING'S SYSTEM IS UNLIKELY TO BE TRANSMITTED TO ANOTHER ORGANISM.

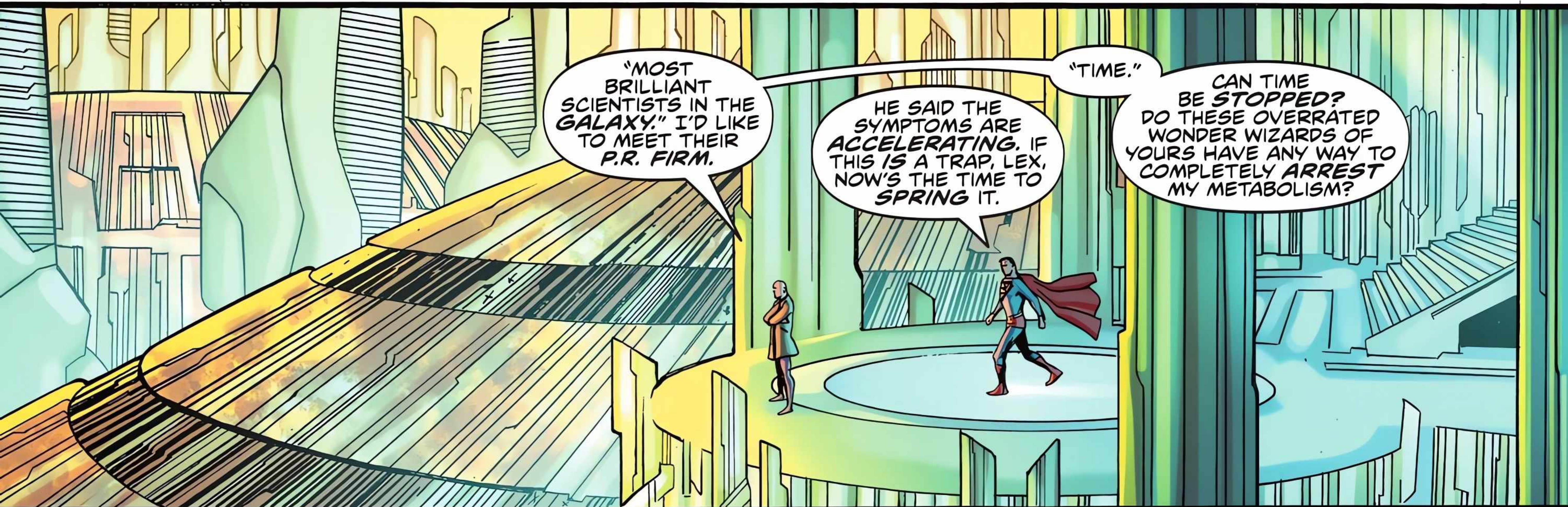
THAT IS, UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE IT IS FEEDING DIRECTLY OFF HIS UNIQUE DNA--

--AND METASTASIZING AT AN EXPONENTIAL RATE INDEPENDENT OF HIS NATURAL METABOLISM, MEANING NOT EVEN A CRYOGENIC STATE IS AN OPTION.



HE WILL BEGIN TO AGE MORE RAPIDLY AS HIS ORGANS GRADUALLY FAIL.

FROM RONDOR RAYS TO NUCLEOCHEMISTRY, WE KNOW OF NO WAY TO EXTRACT OR NULLIFY THE DISEASE.



"MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTISTS IN THE GALAXY." I'D LIKE TO MEET THEIR P.R. FIRM.

HE SAID THE SYMPTOMS ARE ACCELERATING. IF THIS IS A TRAP, LEX, NOW'S THE TIME TO SPRING IT.

"TIME."

CAN TIME BE STOPPED? DO THESE OVERRATED WONDER WIZARDS OF YOURS HAVE ANY WAY TO COMPLETELY ARREST MY METABOLISM?

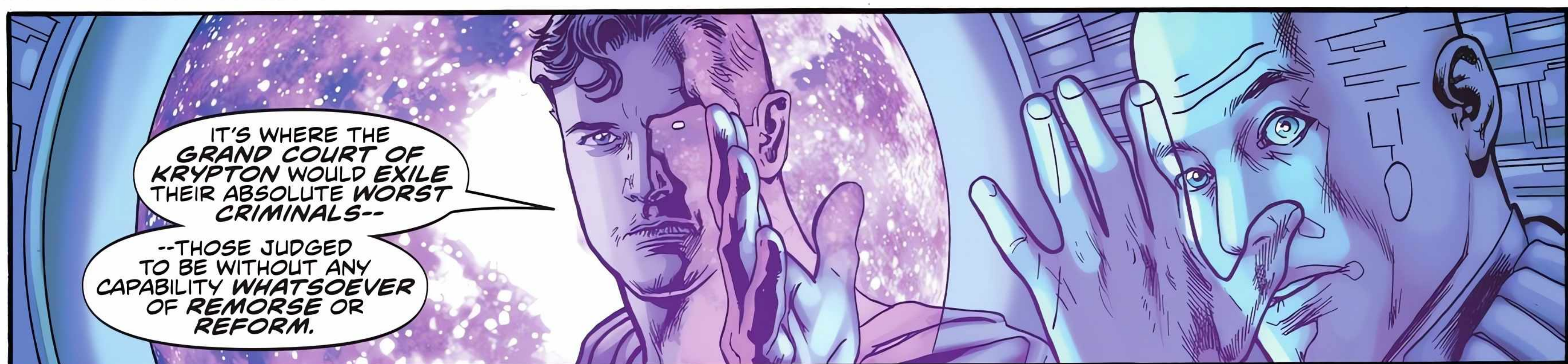
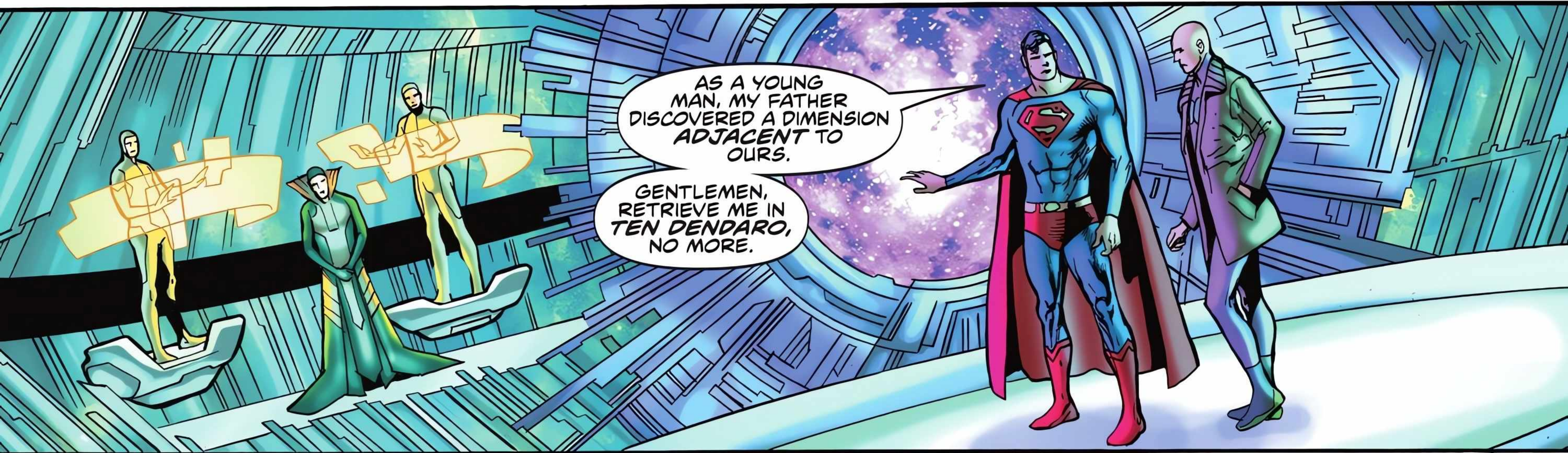


I CAN THINK OF ONLY ONE, BUT IT'S THE OLD SAW: THE CURE IS WORSE THAN THE DISEASE.

WORSE THAN DYING? HOW?



I'LL LET YOU BE THE JUDGE.



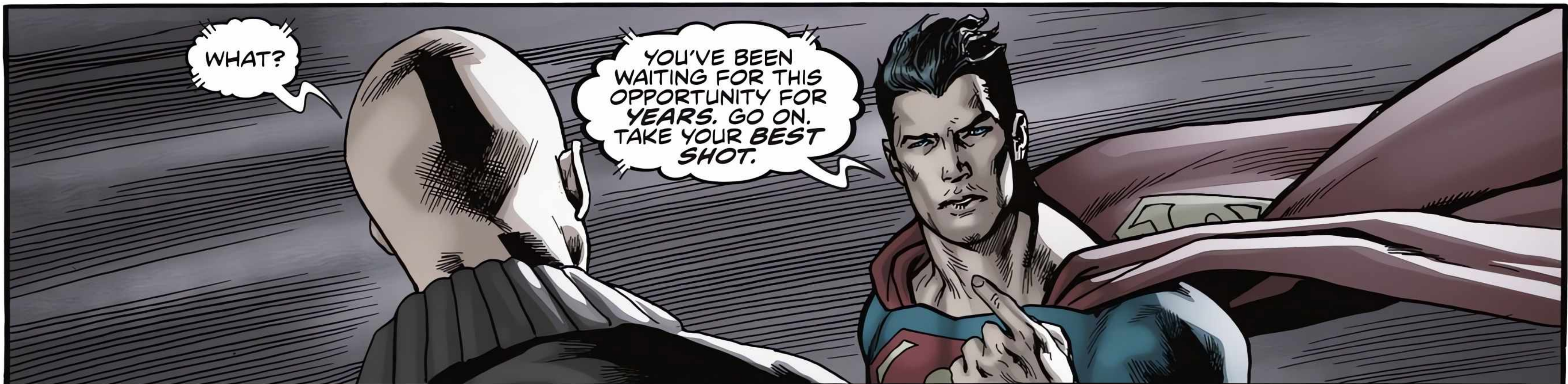


I CAN HEAR YOU. TELEPATHY?

THE ONLY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION IN A REALM DEVOID OF ATMOSPHERE.

DEVOID OF EVERYTHING, IT LOOKS LIKE. WHAT ARE THE PHYSICS OF THIS PLACE?

HIT ME.



WHAT?

YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR YEARS. GO ON. TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT.



HHHHNGH--!



AND THAT'S THE NATURAL STATE OF LIVING ORGANISMS IN THE ZONE. YOU'RE NOW--



A DISCORPORATION AND SUBSEQUENT TRANSFORMATION OF SOLID MOLECULES INTO A COHESIVE CLOUD OF DARK ENERGY CAPABLE OF SUSTAINING BRAIN WAVES.

I'M NOT AN IDIOT.



HERE, I CAN
EXIST INDEFINITELY
WITHOUT AGING
OR REQUIRING
SUSTENANCE.
AM I CORRECT?

LARGELY.
BUT AS YOU CAN
GUESS FROM THE
TELEPATHY, YOUR
MENTAL STATE IS
AMPLIFIED
HERE.

THEY SAY,
GIVEN ENOUGH
DETERMINATION
AND WILLPOWER, IT'S
POSSIBLE TO MAKE
YOURSELF TEMPORARILY
"SOLID" ENOUGH TO
INTERACT WITH THE
TERRAIN...



...THOUGH
I CAN'T IMAGINE
WHY YOU'D
WANT TO.

IF YOU
REMAIN IN THE
ZONE, THAT'LL
BUY US SOME
TIME.

AND DON'T
WORRY. THEY
CAN'T HURT
YOU.

"THEY"
BEING--

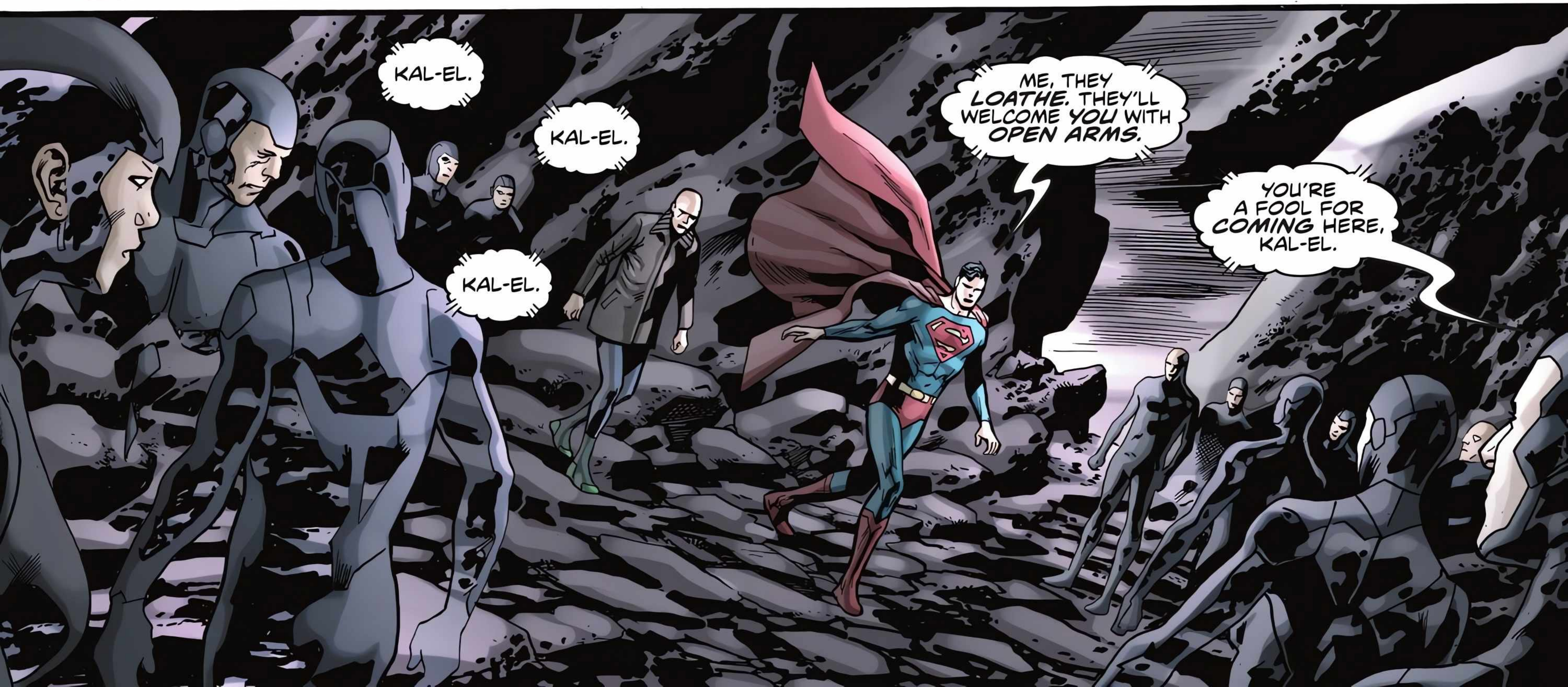
AH,
YES.



A PRISON
REQUIRES
PRISONERS,
DOES IT
NOT?

EVERY ONCE
IN A WHILE, THIS
DIMENSION ALIGNS
WITH OURS LONG ENOUGH FOR
THE PRISONERS TO GET
HAZY GLIMPSSES OF
EARTH.

WHEN
THAT HAPPENS,
THEY FOCUS ENOUGH
ATTENTION ON ME
THAT I'M CONFIDENT
THEY'VE LEARNED
WHO YOU ARE.



KAL-EL.

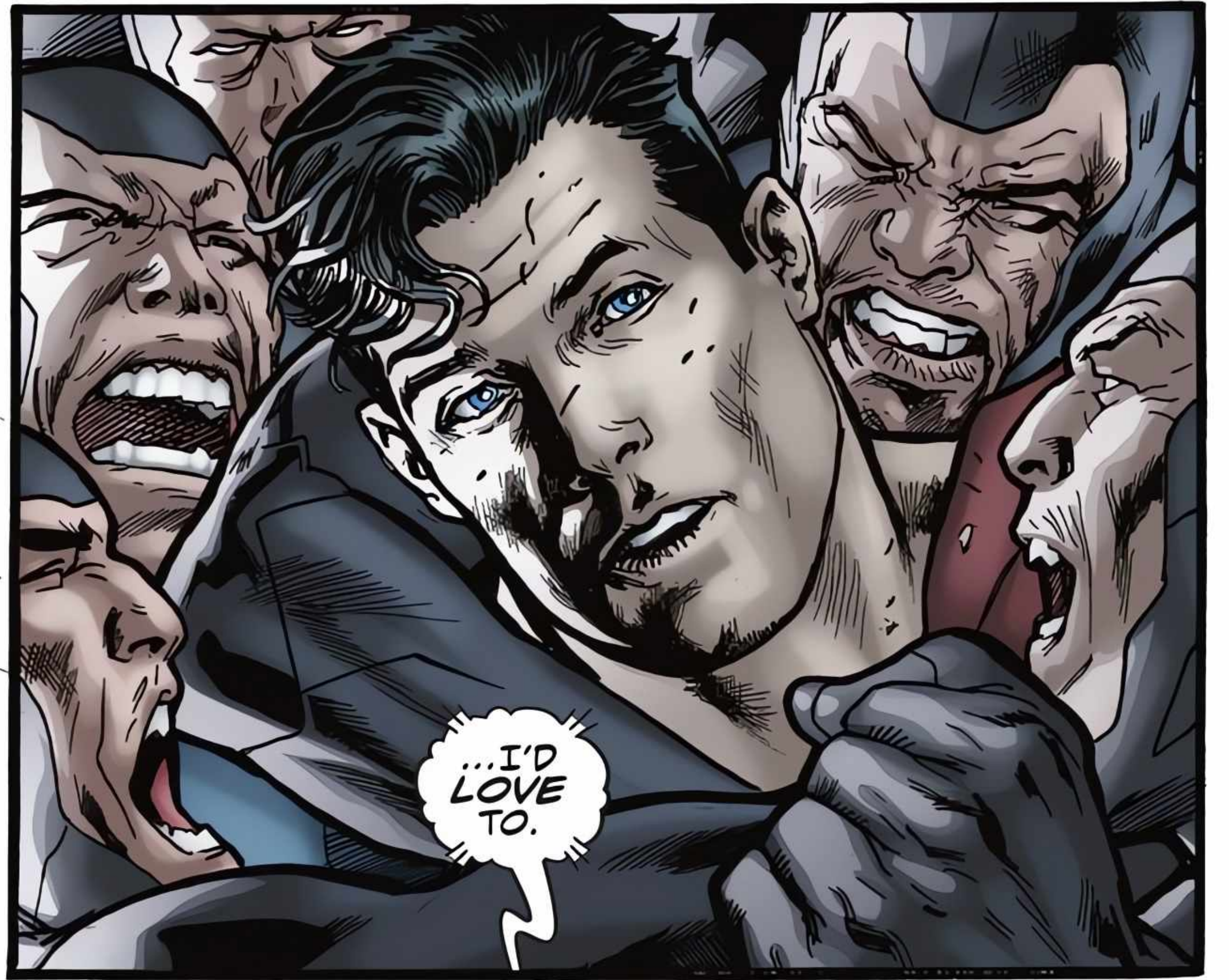
KAL-EL.

KAL-EL.

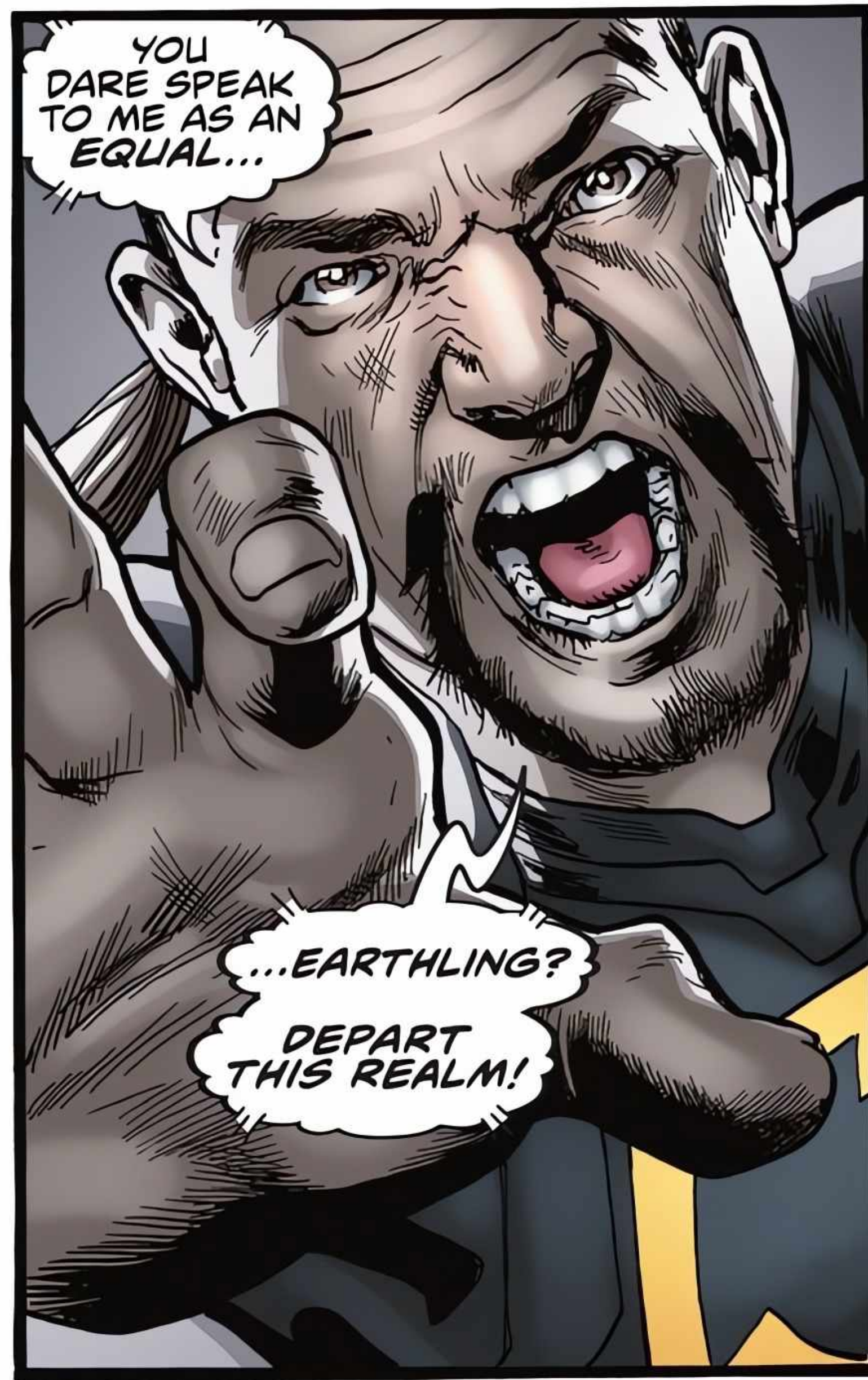
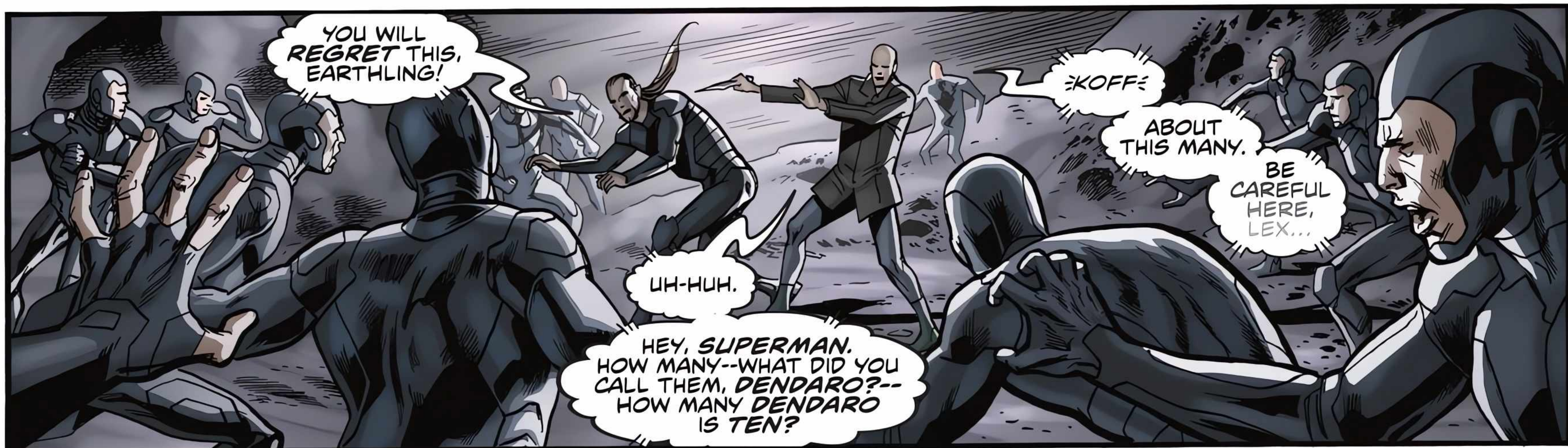
ME, THEY
LOATHE. THEY'LL
WELCOME YOU WITH
OPEN ARMS.

YOU'RE
A FOOL FOR
COMING HERE,
KAL-EL.













THAT...
...THAT
TOOK A BIT
OUT OF ME,
DIDN'T IT?

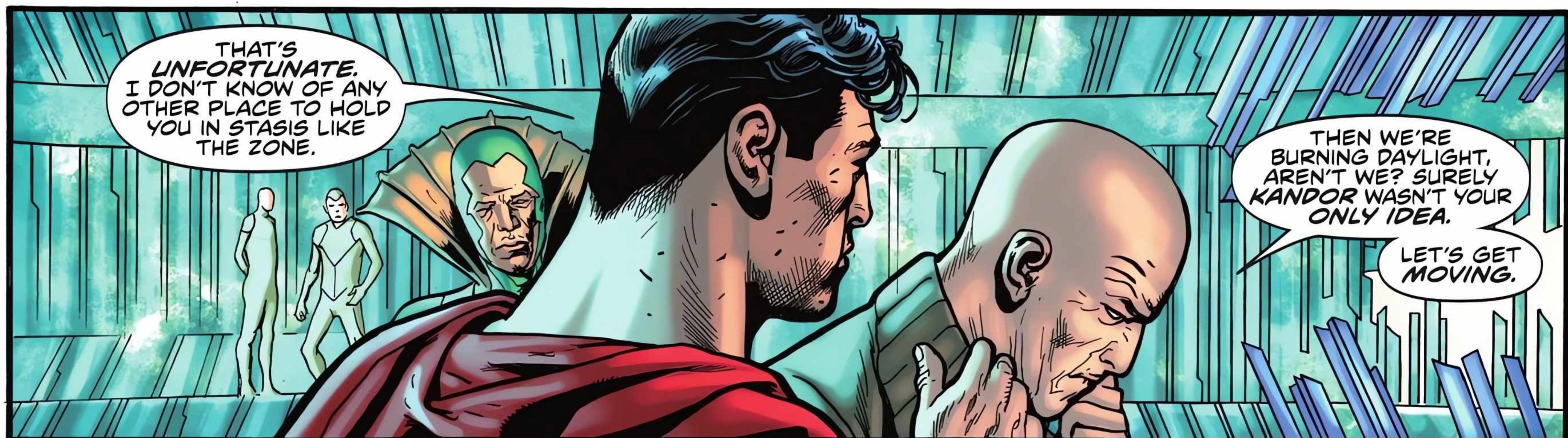


LEX,
HOW DID
THEY--

LET'S--
--NNGHH--

--LET'S JUST
SAY THEY ROLLED UP
THE **WELCOME MAT**.
THEY HATED ME **SO**
MUCH, THEY WERE ABLE
TO **COMBINE** THEIR
WILLPOWER ENOUGH TO
SHOVE ME OUT.

ZOD
WOULDN'T
RECOGNIZE AN
ALLY IF THEY
SHOWED UP WEARING
A **GIANT BOW**
AND BROUGHT
CAKE.



THAT'S
UNFORTUNATE.
I DON'T KNOW OF ANY
OTHER PLACE TO HOLD
YOU IN STASIS LIKE
THE **ZONE**.

THEN WE'RE
BURNING DAYLIGHT,
AREN'T WE? SURELY
KANDOR WASN'T YOUR
ONLY IDEA.

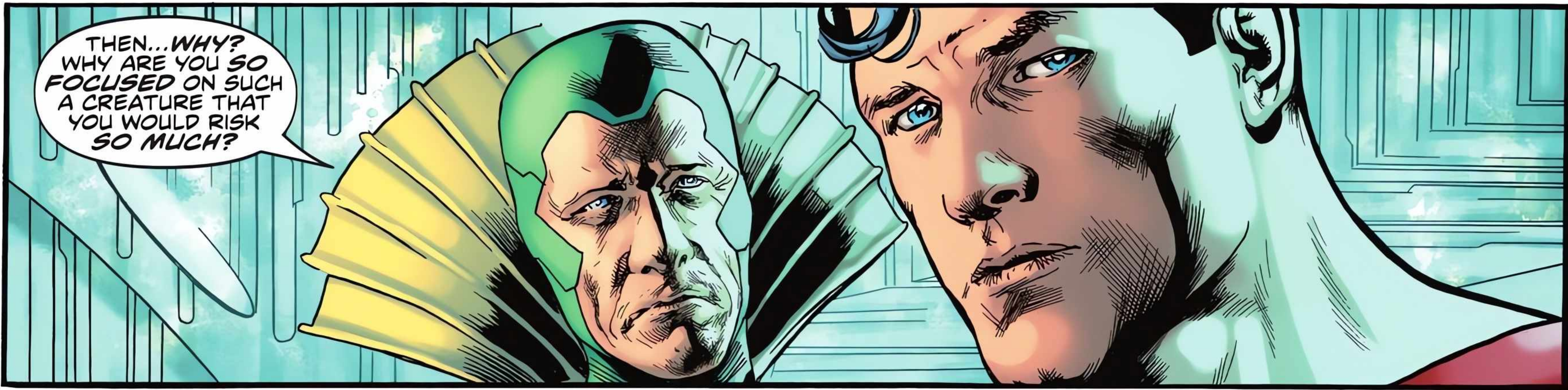
LET'S GET
MOVING.



KAL-EL, WE
WERE **OBSERVING**.
WE NEARLY **LOST** YOU
OVER THAT... THAT
MONSTER.

EVEN IN
KANDOR, WE ARE
AWARE OF LEX LUTHOR'S
LIMITLESS CAPACITY FOR
EVIL. SURELY YOUR WORLD
WOULD BE **SAFER**
SHOULD HE **EXPIRE**,
WOULD IT NOT?

PROBABLY.



S U P E R M A NTM

• THE LAST DAYS OF •

LEX LUTHOR



DC
BLACK
LABEL

ISSUE TWO
ON SALE
SEPTEMBER 2023

MARK WAID

Mark Waid, a *New York Times* bestselling author, bought his first DC comic at age four and never stopped. After serving the company as an associate editor in the late 1980s, he went on to pursue a full-time career as a comics writer and has, in the 35-plus years since, published nearly 2,000 stories. Among them is his collaboration with artist Alex Ross, *Kingdom Come*, one of the all-time highest-selling American graphic novels, as well as long runs on *Flash*, *Justice League*, and many other superhero and humor titles for a variety of companies. Along the way, he has held every job in comics there is to hold, from publisher to editor-in-chief to artist to store owner and more. Currently, he writes *Batman/Superman: World's Finest* and *Shazam!* for DC Comics.

BRYAN HITCH

Bryan Hitch is an English comics artist who began his career at Marvel UK. After working on such titles as *Action Force* and *Transformers*, he teamed up with writer Warren Ellis to reboot the WildStorm series *Stormwatch* and launch *The Authority*, which led to a yearlong run on JLA. Hitch has also provided character designs for the animated films *Ultimate Avengers* and *Ultimate Avengers 2* as well as the video game *Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*.

KEVIN NOWLAN

Kevin Nowlan began his comics career at Marvel, pencilling a fill-in issue of *Doctor Strange* in 1983. Later, at DC, he drew *The Outsiders Annual* and "The Secret Origin of Man-Bat," and in the early 1990s he crafted character designs for *Batman: The Animated Series*. His favorite project to date has been his collaboration with legendary comics writer Alan Moore on the adventures of Jack B. Quick, Boy Inventor, for the America's Best Comics title *Tomorrow Stories*—a work that earned him an Eisner Award for Best Penciller/Inker in 2000. Nowlan also supplied covers for *Metamorpho: Year One* and did design work for DC Direct's line of mini-busts featuring characters from the Dreaming. He lives in Central Kansas with his wife, two kids, and an aging dog.

S U P E R M A N

THE LAST DAYS OF

LEX LUTHOR

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